the weekly standard

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REGIME CHANGE IN IRAN?
REUEL MARC GERECHT

# The Next Kennedy

## Kathleen Kennedy Townsend's campaign for the Maryland statehouse . . . and beyond

by Matt Labash

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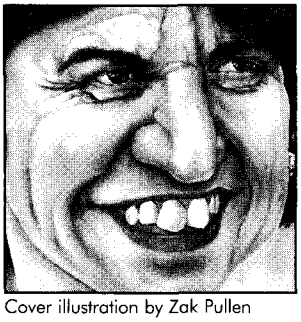

Cover illustration by Zak Pullen

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# Al Gore Takes His Stand

Last Thursday, Al Gore (who is not the president of the United States) showed up in Washington to criticize George W. Bush (who is) for—among other things—proceeding too forcefully and publicly with plans for a possible military overthrow of Saddam Hussein's Iraqi dictatorship. At a meeting in the Dirksen Senate Office Building with a group called "21st Century Democrats," Gore, who lost the November 2000 presidential election, accused Bush, who won it, of...

Well, Gore's comments, to be properly appreciated, should be viewed in the full context of the many comments he's made on the subject throughout a long and varied and unusually slippery career. So we'll run the highlights in chronological order, and save the 21st Century Democrats for last.

"It is doubtful that the conquest of Iraq is anything this nation would ever want to seek. Even if it were adopting that as a stated goal, it would be a terrible mistake, for reasons we can all certainly see clearly.... Doubtless, among the exiled Iraqis, one can find survivors who are people of virtue and wisdom, but it is hard to see how these individuals might come to power unless we were to install them, and that would require the conquest and occupation of Iraq, which is not in prospect and should not be in prospect."

*—January 30, 1991, on the Senate floor*

"I don't think we should have left Saddam's regime in place.... I think we made a tragic mistake in the days right after the war in deciding that the best way to maintain stability in Iraq was to leave the Baathist regime in power there.... We should have bent every policy—and we should do it now—to overthrow that regime and make sure that Saddam Hussein is removed from power."

*—September 19, 1991, on CNN's* Larry King Live

Saddam Hussein has "been in power for much longer than we would like," but "some of what is now underway with respect to Iraq in [the Clinton] administration is not something we can talk about in the public arena."

*—April 30, 2000, on CNN's* Late Edition

"I certainly question why we would be publicly blustering and announcing an invasion a year or two years in advance.... I do think the situation our country faces now is fundamentally different than what we faced on the eve of the Gulf War. If the rest of the world does not see what it regards as a sufficient provocation to justify an invasion by the United States, then the diplomatic cost would be extremely high."

*—July 25, 2002, addressing the 21st Century Democrats*

That certainly clears things up, doesn't it? ♦

## The Yahoo! Kowtow

Information that might "jeopardize state security and disrupt social stability, contravene laws and regulations and spread superstition and obscenity" will, effective Aug. 1, no longer be posted by major Internet portals in China, thanks to their participation in the voluntary Public Pledge on Self-Discipline for the China Internet Industry.

Most notable among the self-censoring signatories of the pledge is U.S.-based Yahoo!, which maintains a Chinese-language website. It appears to be the only non-China-based company among the hundreds that have bowed to Beijing's pressure to uphold "the ethical norms of the socialist cultural civilization." But signing such a pact is only the most recent in a series of capitulations by Yahoo! and other American companies that have eroded hopes that widespread Internet access would be instrumental in bringing democracy to China, a trend reported on by Ethan Gutmann in these pages earlier this year ("Who Lost China's Internet?" Feb. 25, 2002). China's more than 38 million Internet users remain effectively isolated from information that might be a threat to the Chinese government, unless they choose to use one of the circuitous and illegal routes being shut down daily in the name of public safety.

There are good odds that ingenious geeks will continue to outwit the Chinese bureaucracy and gain access to forbidden material for the enterprising Chinese user, but in the meantime Yahoo!China has chosen to be part of the problem, not the solution. ♦

## A Moyers Moment

Weekly Standard readers will recall from Stephen F. Hayes's cover story ("PBS's Televangelist," Feb. 25, 2002) the walking conflict-of-interest that is Bill Moyers. His m.o. is simple. As head of the Florence and John Schumann Foundation, with assets of more than $90 million, Moyers is the Daddy Warbucks of dozens of organizations on the left. At the same time, from his prized perch on taxpayer-funded television, Moyers essentially conducts P.R. campaigns for many of the same groups he supports with his foundation. All of this would be unexceptional—a case of putting your mouth where your money is—were it not for the Tartuffean bravura with which Moyers scolds his political enemies for their conflicts.



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In mid-June, for instance, Moyers interviewed pollster Daniel Yankelovich, chairman of "the research organization" Public Agenda—a nonprofit organization, Moyers gushed, that "has long been at the forefront on social research on national issues, whose in-depth surveys capture the public's deeply held concerns and attitudes."

Yankelovich claimed that Americans "don't feel that the people who are supposed to be looking out for their interests are exactly doing so—more looking out for their own interests," a favorite Moyers theme. "So when the watchdogs become lapdogs," asked Moyers, "there's nobody to bark for the people who have been exploited?" Yankelovich: "Yeah, and you know not only lapdogs, but become sort of interested in—their own doggie pursuits—interested in the interests of the insiders, in the interests of the institution rather than in the people the institutions are supposed to serve. Yeah, and, you know, conflict of interest. It's been meaningless the last couple of years in Wall Street and other places."

Other places, perhaps, like Bill Moyers's Public Affairs Television, Inc., and Yankelovich's Public Agenda. What Moyers never mentions is that his wife, Judith Davison Moyers, is on the board of directors of Public Agenda. She is also the president of Public Affairs Television, Inc., the "private" production company that turns taxpayer dollars into *Now with Bill Moyers*, the show that aired the interview. Not that there's anything wrong with that. We just thought we'd yap a little for the taxpayers who feel exploited. ♦

## The Peking Duck

Congressional sources say that the Bush administration is preparing to oppose a provision in next year's defense authorization bill that would upgrade the U.S.-Taiwan defense relationship. Among other things, the bill requires the Pentagon to assist Taiwan's military with operational training and promotes efforts to establish interoperability between U.S. and Taiwan forces. Bob Stump, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, sponsored the provision on the reasonable grounds that, since President Bush said America would do whatever it takes to defend Taiwan from an attack, it makes sense to improve Taiwan's capabilities.

Leading the charge against closer ties are Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly and NSC senior staffer James Moriarty. The provision itself is nearly identical to language in the Taiwan Security Enhancement Act (TSEA), a congressional proposal blocked by the Clinton White House in 2000. What's baffling to Taiwan's friends is that both Bush and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld publicly supported TSEA's passage at the time. Given Assistant Secretary of Defense Peter Rodman's recent trip to Beijing to try to restart military-to-military exchanges, it appears the administration is bending over backwards not to ruffle China's feathers. But coming on the heels of the Pentagon's own report on China's military buildup, the administration just looks confused. ♦



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# Casual

## Smells Like Team Spirit

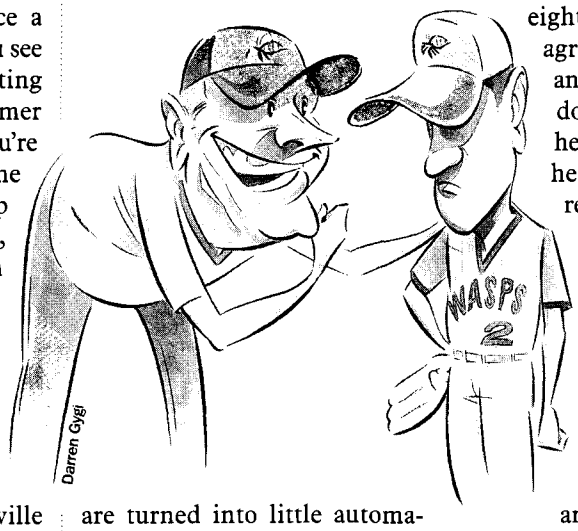
I sometimes find myself in dinner party conversations with people who complain about the increasing professionalization of kids' sports. And I find that most of the people who utter these laments have one thing in common: They don't know what they are talking about. Over the past four years, and despite his paternal genetic inheritance, my older son has played on a travel baseball team. It's been a wonderful experience for all involved.

On the surface, I concede, it looks a little extreme. He plays about 80 games a year and practices once a week during the winter. When you see little groups of 11-year-olds getting pick-off move advice from former major leaguers at skills clinics, you're sort of agog. During parts of the spring and summer we drive up and down the mid-Atlantic states, playing in large tournaments with heavyweight bout-type names. A while back my son played in the Beast of the East tournament in southern Maryland. Last weekend we were up near Reading, Pennsylvania, for the Clash of the Champions, and this weekend we'll be just south of Charlottesville for a tournament organized by the novelist John Grisham, maybe called The Legal Thrilla in Charlottesvilla.

When you pull into one of the hotels for a weekend tournament, you see coaches' vans, sometimes with team decals on the doors. The hotel pool is teeming with kids with baseball tans—brown on their necks and faces, pale on their foreheads where their caps protect them from the sun. And there are roving packs of soccer girls there for their own tournament, putting serious strain on the dinner buffet. It's as if the entire weekend economy of semi-rural America depends on traveling tribes of prepubescent jocks.

Last summer the team played in a tournament in Cooperstown, New York. Facing incredible teams from California and Florida, they went 2-5, nothing to brag about. But they got to sleep in the Thurman Munson cabin and eat meals with the players from the 63 other teams. Our kid promptly declared it one of the best weeks of his life. The general rule seems to be that kids take about 5 to 10 minutes to get over a crushing loss, but the parents and coaches take about an hour.

The standard critique of this level of competition is that the kids are turned into little automatons by parents who are trying to live vicariously through their kids' performance.




Over the past four years we've seen almost none of that. The norm is that kids who play this way are, by some freak of brain chemistry, baseball fanatics. If they could, they would wake up and practice baseball, have lunch while reading *Baseball Weekly*, play baseball in the afternoon, and watch ESPN's "Baseball Tonight" in the evening.

The adults are not always so pure of heart. We once saw a coach kick dirt at an umpire (one parent on the same team threw a whiffle ball in the air to distract opposing outfielders when one of their kids hit a fly ball), and a few times we've seen coaches who are jerks shout abusively at their players.

But most coaches are good-humored, and there's no correlation between the quality of the team and the loutishness of the coach. We have no factional politics on our team. The families travel together, eat together, and spend long mornings and afternoons together as one jolly community. The siblings have their own friendships. The dads talk baseball. The moms talk about deeper things and take turns being nervous when their kids are at the plate.

Without ever discussing it, we parents have settled on the rule that we will never lobby the coach for playing time for our kids. And we're lucky that the dad who runs and sets the tone for the team has a relentlessly upbeat spirit. When our kids were eight, we noticed that in every disagreement with the other coach or an umpire, our coach always backed down. We finally asked him what he did for a living. "I'm a litigator," he said. A good one, too, but he refuses to take it out on the field.

The final thing the kids get out of the team, not to be solemn about it, is character instruction. When's the last time you heard a teacher tell a kid to tuck in his shirt? Coaches do it all the time. The educational system teaches kids how to read and do math (maybe), but only coaches are unapologetic about teaching deportment and integrity. Sometimes I think they are the only ones left in society with the self-confidence to give moral instruction and the wherewithal to know what to say.

Baseball is full of failure. Batters are out most of the time. Pitchers lose the strike zone. Players have to sit on the bench. And so it provides plenty of character-building opportunities. Aside from the joy of the game and the camaraderie of the team, players do get something important out of it, aside from the ability to extract sunflower seeds from the shells without even thinking.

**David Brooks**



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## The Governor Responds

In her July 22 review of Hugh Davis Graham's *Collision Course: The Strange Convergence of Affirmative Action and Immigration Policy in America*, Beth Henary takes a swipe at our One Florida initiative, suggesting that it is an extension of, rather than an alternative to, the failed race-based affirmative action policies of the past. She mistakes our vision completely.

The facts regarding affirmative action in Florida are simple. State universities may no longer use race or ethnicity as a factor in admissions. Nor may Florida's state agencies and departments offer minority-owned businesses set-asides and price preferences as was done in the past. In fact, Florida is the only state in the nation through executive action to have eliminated race-based quotas, set-asides, and price preferences.

We have replaced them with One Florida, which we defend on good conservative principles. We have eliminated unfair and unconstitutional practices like quotas and set-asides without turning our backs on minorities. Instead, we have focused on increasing opportunities, without guaranteed results, through greater minority outreach, recruitment, and assistance. We have focused on higher student achievement and a better business climate for all, hoping to combat the disparities that have led others to advocate for race-based "solutions." We have offered a more optimistic alternative in place of traditional affirmative action programs. The success of One Florida proves that it's possible to move forward on principle, make significant headway on reform, and expand opportunity at the same time.

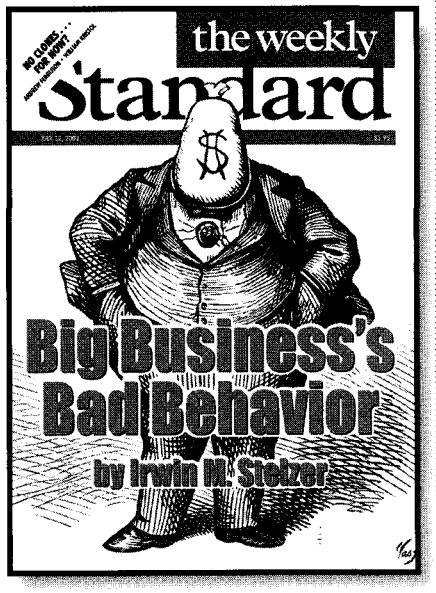
I welcome constructive criticism, particularly from those who share my conservative principles. But it is strange indeed, and perhaps even counterproductive, to diminish any advances in conservative public policy, especially in controversial areas that have seen little or no change in decades. To criticize conservative change and maintain silence in the face of success only guarantees the further entrenchment of old institutions and bureaucracies.

Jeb Bush
*Tallahassee, FL*

## Damage Control

William Kristol's editorial on the report of the President's Council on Bioethics ("The Kass Council's Good Counsel," July 22) is an exercise in "damage control." Kristol has led the campaign for a complete ban on all kinds of human cloning—both cloning for producing children and cloning for biomedical research. He tries to interpret the council's report as supporting his position when he says that "a majority of the council calls in the report for a four-year federal moratorium—a national ban—on all human cloning."

Anyone who reads the report will see that identifying the recommended




"moratorium" as a "ban" is a distortion. The council was unanimous in recommending a "ban" on reproductive cloning. But the council was divided on the issue of therapeutic cloning. Only seven of the eighteen members favored a complete ban on cloning for biomedical research (Kristol's position). But once they saw that they did not have a majority, they came up with the idea of a four-year "moratorium," and three other members were won over to this position, which created a bare majority of ten for the "moratorium." (In moving toward this compromise, they were following the lead of the U.S. Senate, where a similar compromise seems likely.)

Of course, it is true that a "moratorium" is a "temporary ban." But the point is that those who wanted a permanent ban on therapeutic cloning believe that all cloned embryos are morally inviolable and should never be used for medical research. By contrast, some of those who voted for the "moratorium" do not regard the embryo up to the blastocyst stage as being so inviolable as to forever foreclose using them for research.

What the report really shows is a move away from extremist positions toward a moderate position that reflects the good sense of the American people as demonstrated in recent Senate debates on this issue. At one extreme are the fanatics who advocate reproductive cloning. At the other extreme are the fanatics who advocate a complete ban on all cloning, including therapeutic cloning that would relieve human suffering. The sensible, moderate position is to reject reproductive cloning but to be open to therapeutic cloning when it can be shown to improve human health.

Larry Arnhart
*DeKalb, IL*

## Equal Opportunity?

We are longtime subscribers to The Weekly Standard and found Fred Barnes's "The Bush Doctrine Comes to Cuba" (July 15) to be one of the most clear, factual, and logical analyses of the situation in Cuba to date. However, Barnes writes that "[Castro] encouraged foreign firms to invest in joint ventures with Cubans." If "Cubans" designates all the nationals living in the island, the statement does not hold true. Cubans are not allowed to participate in any investment in their own country. Only the Cuban "government"—namely the Castro brothers, their children, and the high echelons of the nomenklatura—may participate in joint ventures with foreign investors.

Rafael E. Gomez Jr.
Montserrat C. Gomez
*Jacksonville, FL*

## Have a Look Downunder

I have just read Peter Berkowitz's piece on the dissenting justices' opin-



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Then it's time to attack any tumors that may already exist. This is the one area where your doctor is probably concentrating most...and don't get me wrong, I'm *not* trying to upset the apple cart here. But I'll bet he's already encouraged you to read up on your therapy. You and your doctor are a team! If he's good, he wants you to be involved. And, as you'll see, in the last few years alone...

**Conventional therapy has leaped light-years ahead**. So much so, that literature published just last year can be useless or much worse. For example, right now I'm looking at a best-seller from my local bookstore that claims to be the last word in prostate cancer treatment. It confidently states that *radical prostate surgery* is your safest, surest cure. But did you know...?

* **Only 4% of English urologists** still favor radical prostate surgery...
* **A Dartmouth University study** now declares it of "questionable value" for many men...

*And new surgical techniques* are yielding better results in many cases, with fewer side-effects. Like the new laser surgery that's virtually pain-free and doesn't even cause bleeding. Or the *cryosurgery* breakthrough that can have you home the next day, *with your potency intact*.

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**But chances are your doctor is still pretty new to this entire field**. So you've got to help him work the best ones into your battle plan.

Next, you'll find out *how to combine* all the best of these vitamins, minerals, herbs, plus some key fatty acids and other nutrients -- into *the ultimate prevention and cancer-defense program*. And if there's only one part of the book you follow, make it this one, my friend! Because, even if you've already wiped out the cancer in your body, we want to *keep* you cancer-free for the rest of your long life.

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ions in the school voucher decision ("Liberals Versus Religion," July 15). I find their reasoning particularly bizarre because I am an Australian. The Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia contains a provision (Section 116) barring the establishment of religion. Yet Australia has had direct Commonwealth payment to religious schools since the early 1960s. It was controversial at the time, but is now almost entirely unremarkable.

Australia has one of the highest rates of non-government school attendance in the Western world, mainly, but not entirely, at religious schools dominated by the Catholic school sector. None of the evils the dissenting justices fear has remotely come to pass. Australia is a highly secular society and is becoming, if anything, even more so.

MICHAEL WARBY
*Melbourne, Australia*

## "I WAS THERE"

THE FACT THAT NO ONE IN THE PAST has linked Truman to the Venona program does not mean he did not know about it ("Spies Like Us," Harvey Klehr, July 1/July 8). Cryptologic records verify that I was there, was head of the program, and have personal knowledge of events surrounding Venona. I worked with General Omar Bradley and General Carter W. Clarke as the technical director of Venona. *Sacred Secrets* records my experiences and my certain knowledge that President Truman knew, but did not like, the facts about Venona.

From August 1945 on, I participated in preparing data for the chief executive. The notes I prepared shortly thereafter (which still exist) have been the sure foundation for "Kirby's recollection many decades afterwards." I was there (a documented fact) and I have now chosen to reveal new facts not known to "everyone who has written on Venona."

The nonexistent paper trail of the White House liaison operation is fully explained by the extensive and carefully implemented security program designed to prevent uncontrolled revelation of the existence and operations of the Venona program and later of ties to the White House. Venona was a "carve-out program" with technical operations performed by cryptanalysts and linguists from the Army Security Agency but with the controls of dissemination, security provisions, personnel security, and program access exercised by the White House.

Another small but important detail concerning the following section of the review should be cleared up: "The Schecters argue that Harry Truman was told at a June 1945 meeting 'that U.S. Army code breakers were reading secret Soviet messages.' Their source is former NSA analyst Oliver Kirby, who recalled Carter Clarke, head of Army Intelligence, telling him the story." Klehr then adds: "But, in June 1945, when Clarke allegedly told the president [about the existence of the Venona program], the Army's cryptanalysts had not yet begun to read Soviet messages and had no inkling they concerned espionage."

Complete code book recovery and reading the full text of messages had not been accomplished. However, messages had been matched with reused additive encipherment keys, and "spell groups" had been recovered which enabled some cover names to be retrieved. In addition, studies of the traffic links, addresses, and entrée into several other codes enabled the identification of the Soviet intelligence agency of origin. With data from German wartime exploitation of Soviet Security forces' messages, all these unique "scraps" identified these messages as evolving from a healthy Soviet espionage system.

These espionage incursions were understood by the cryptologic and U.S. intelligence units to be a continuing and serious liability for the Democratic party. During the life of the program the political problems kept it under tight wraps. As discussion with Secretary of Defense Forrestal showed, President Truman disliked Venona, in part because he did not believe Soviet spying was a serious problem even when he was presented with details of spy penetrations, names of spies, and other data showing the effectivity of Soviet espionage.

Thanks for this opportunity to put some of the facts in the review in context.

OLIVER R. KIRBY
*Former head of Venona program, NSA*
*Greenville, TX*

HARVEY KLEHR RESPONDS: Oliver Kirby's recollections are in direct conflict with the accounts of the NSA, its historians, and FBI agents like Robert Lamphere who have written about Venona. Contrary to Kirby's claim, Meredith Gardner did not break the "spell table" for encoding names until late 1946. Kirby's repeated "I was there" assertions would have more credence if they did not contradict documentary evidence.

## ERRATA

KUDOS TO CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL for his excellent, thought-provoking piece on Islam in France ("Allah Mode," July 15). *Une petite erreur*: Jacques Delors, father of Martine Aubry, was president of the European Commission, but never prime minister of France.

DAVID A. BELL
*Baltimore, MD*

IT WAS RATHER AMUSING to read Stephen Schwartz's claim that "*Islamic Horizons* is the bimonthly organ of the Islamic Society of North America, which represents Wahhabi Islam in American mosques. Its last printed edition came out in September/October 2001" ("All the Hate That's Fit to Print," July 22).

The reality is that *Islamic Horizons* distributes 65-75,000 copies of each issue and is publishing regularly. You are welcome to contact us to purchase back issues. In fact, we are now making ready the September/October 2002 issue.

OMER BIN ABDULLAH
*Editor,* Islamic Horizons
*Herndon, VA*

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the weekly Standard

# The Willful Majority

No one has proved more important to the confirmation of judges—or non-confirmation, as the case may be—than James Jeffords, who last year shifted control of the Senate to the Democrats. Had Jeffords not bolted the Republican party, we wouldn't be writing this editorial, for, as the lawyers say, there would be no case or controversy. The Republican Senate would be quietly and without delay confirming Bush's nominees.

But Jeffords did what he did, and with the Democratic Senate pitted against the Republican administration, confirmation has become less a process than a time of stress—especially for nominees to the highly important circuit courts of appeal. It is common for presidents to see most of their circuit nominees confirmed during at least their first two years in office. But, at the 18-month mark of the Bush presidency, only 34 percent of circuit nominees—11 of 32—have been confirmed.

That is far and away the lowest percentage at such an early point in any presidency, and might not be as startling if Bush's nominees were on the whole a subpar bunch—which is manifestly not the case—or if the president had tapped most of the nominees only recently, within the past six months, say. But among the unconfirmed are 10 lawyers Bush named more than a year ago. And only 2 of them have even had hearings before the Judiciary Committee.

By putting the Democrats in charge of the Senate, Jeffords's switch made it possible for them to slow the process for circuit nominees. Of course, if a less liberal group of Democrats were sitting on the Judiciary Committee, the percentage of confirmed circuit nominees probably would be higher. But the 10 Democrats on the committee (there are 9 Republicans) are, as a group, more liberal than the Senate's Democratic majority. As such, they are more inclined than not to oppose a nominee on ideological grounds—as Sen. Charles Schumer has argued should be the standard. And, holding a one-vote edge, the Democrats on the committee have the raw power to kill a nomination, as they did earlier this year with Charles Pickering's.

So far, Pickering is the only nominee to have been voted down in committee. Will Texas Supreme Court Justice Priscilla Owen become the second? Bush announced her nomination to the Fifth Circuit more than 400 days ago—on May 9, 2001. Last week she finally got a hearing. There is no question that she is qualified. She excelled in law school and for 17 years as a commercial litigator with a top-tier firm in Houston. She was elected to the Texas Supreme Court in 1994 and reelected overwhelmingly in 2000, having been endorsed by every major newspaper in the state. Former justices of the Texas Supreme Court and past presidents of the state bar have fairly leaped to say good things about her. And the American Bar Association in its review of her candidacy for the Fifth Circuit—an assessment Senate Democrats insist upon for every nominee—unanimously deemed her "well-qualified," its highest rating.

It so happens, however, that Owen has drawn the ire of the political and legal left, in Texas and in Washington. An aggressive campaign to defeat her nomination has focused on opinions said to be biased against abortion rights. Of course, the issue with any set of opinions is how they interpret and apply the relevant law. And in assessing how a judge treats a particular law, one must take care: Some laws can reasonably be construed in different ways. So it has been with Texas's Parental Notification Act, which creates a judicial bypass by which teenage girls may have abortions under certain circumstances without telling their parents. Owen has more narrowly construed the statute than have some of her colleagues, including then Justice Alberto Gonzales (now White House counsel). But her interpretation of the law—the subject that dominated her hearing—is well within the bounds of reason.

Still, committee Democrats can defeat the Owen nomination if they want to. And the fix may be in. During the hearing, no Democrat voiced support. In Texas, Ron Kirk, the Democratic nominee for Phil Gramm's seat, has opposed her nomination. If the committee rejects Owen, however, it will be making a major statement. For where Pickering was a marginal choice for the Fifth Circuit, Owen is truly a first-rate nominee. If the committee denies her, it can deny anyone—including anyone the president might name to the Supreme Court. President Bush may well be facing, in the 10 Democrats who sit on the Judiciary Committee, an entirely willful majority.

Whatever the fate of the Owen nomination, it should be obvious that if the president wants to appoint judges and justices who share his judicial philosophy, he needs to have reversed what James Jeffords wrought. He needs a Republican Senate—which he can help bring about.

*—Terry Eastland, for the Editors*



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# The Upside of the Down Market

## Corporate corruption has its advantages.

**BY P.J. O'ROURKE**

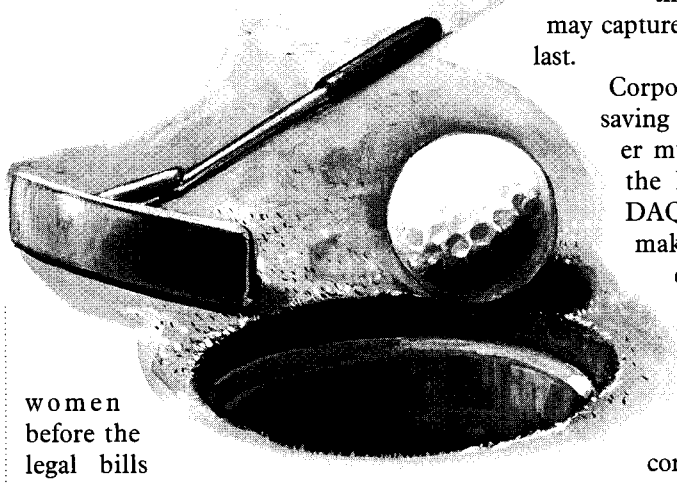
Fred Harper

CORPORATE CORRUPTION endangers everything in which we have, over the past many years, invested our time, effort, and money—particularly Republican control of the House of Representatives. And our 401(k) plans aren't doing so well either. In this period of gloom—with liberals seeking to make hay from capitalist foibles and our own capitalist foibles reduced in value to bales of ditto—it behooves us to look for a moment at the bright side of corporate corruption.

That is, assuming there's any corruption. It may be semantics. When senators and representatives get together in Congress to fix prices on prescription drugs, they're national heroes. When pharmaceutical company CEOs get together on the golf course to fix prices on prescription drugs, they're indicted.

However, if corporate corruption does exist, it has benefits as well as liabilities. Auditing scandals will no doubt improve the sex lives of accountants. Bean counters were previously thought to be drab and unattractive creatures. Now accountants are considered cute—by their fellow prison inmates.

Potentially, our own sex lives also are improved. Numerous senior executives' trophy wives will soon be running around unattached. We wouldn't have stood a chance with these women before the legal bills arrived and the skinny blondes got poor.



Corporate corruption has ecological merits. It's helping to preserve that species known as Democrats—thought to be endangered as recently as the year 2000. Democrats are an important part of the Washington ecosystem. Extinction of Democrats would lead to serious disruption in the food chain. We of the bloodthirsty right-wing press would be forced to rely for our prey solely on John McCain.

And there's more. Suddenly our kids think we're hip. "Gangsta Rap" is very popular with today's teens, as is dressing in prison garb and acting and speaking as if one belonged to the Crips, the Bloods, or some other criminal organization. The subculture of felons is in great vogue among adolescents. Enron, WorldCom, Tyco, and so forth allow us Republicans to say to America's young people, "We *be* thugs." The GOP may capture the youth vote at last.

Corporate corruption is saving us money. However much we've lost on the NYSE and NASDAQ, we'll more than make it up in lower entertainment and redecorating costs when Martha Stewart goes to jail. Plus, corporate corruption is no necessary impediment to making money. *If* you can get your wife's cousin to short your stock the moment you're served with a subpoena.

Finally, corporate corruption has brought me hope about my own professional career. Capitalism is all about adding value. I am a capitalist. But I don't have any value to add. This is my one objection to capitalism. However, besides being a capitalist, I'm a journalist, so I do know how to lie. Thanks to the peculations of the past few months, I've realized that, in the capitalist market system, I can add value, too.

One last cheering thought: Corporate corruption gives al Qaeda, Hezbollah, and other Muslim radicals second thoughts about messing with the United States. If we'll screw our own grandmothers in the stock market, God knows what we'll do to them. ♦

*Contributing editor P.J. O'Rourke is author, most recently, of* The CEO of the Sofa.



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# Held Hostage in Riyadh

## How the Saudis (with the help of the State Dept.) mistreat U.S. citizens. BY STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

As the crisis of U.S.-Saudi relations grows, long-hidden American grievances have begun to emerge. For many Americans the problem of Saudi abuse of U.S. citizens on the kingdom's soil is almost as disturbing as the issue of Saudi involvement in September 11.

The worst cases to come to light so far involve young women, born American citizens with American mothers and Saudi fathers, who are now over 18, yet are not permitted to leave Saudi Arabia. In June congressman Dan Burton held a hearing into the case of the Roush sisters, Alia and Aisha, abducted in 1986, when Alia was 7 and Aisha 3, by their father, Khalid al-Gheshayan, who took them to Saudi Arabia. Al-Gheshayan has connections with the Saudi royal family that have enabled him to evade a U.S. criminal warrant while traveling in the United States. The Roush girls remain captives in the kingdom.

An even more shocking story was reported earlier this month by William McGurn of the *Wall Street Journal*. Amjad Radwan, born in Houston in 1983, was taken to Saudi Arabia by her American mother, Monica Stowers, and Saudi father, Nizar Radwan. Once the family was there, Stowers discovered that her husband was already married.

In 1990, Stowers, with her then 7-year-old daughter, sought shelter in the American embassy in Riyadh. She was ordered out of the building, which, she was informed, is not a "hotel." When she refused to leave, two Marine guards were summoned to expel her from the premises. A U.S. State Department representative called her ex-husband to retrieve the child, and Stowers ended up serving a term in a Saudi prison.

Amjad Radwan herself was then reportedly sodomized by her male relatives, before being married off by her father at 12. She fled and for a time lived out a nightmare with her mother and brother on the edge of Saudi society, inhabiting a derelict school building. Her mother is now in the United States, but Amjad still cannot leave.

*American citizens expect their diplomats to protect them and their interests, and view U.S. embassies as a safe haven.*

Thirty-nine members of Congress, from both sides of the aisle, have signed a letter to Saudi ambassador Prince Bandar bin Sultan demanding Miss Radwan's freedom. On the morning of July 25, congressional interns held a demonstration on the steps of the fortress-like Saudi Embassy across from the Watergate in Washington. It was a cool day, but muggy and cloudy, and if you gazed up at the Saudi flag, with its representation of King Ibn Saud's favorite sword, *raqban* or "the neck-cutter," you could almost imagine yourself on the kingdom's soil.

The demonstration, supported by Rep. Frank Wolf, drew 25 interns, representing more than 350 who have signed a petition demanding that Miss Radwan be allowed to travel freely as an American citizen. The earnest protestors chanted, "Amjad, Amjad, we won't fail, human rights are not for sale," and, "Saudi detention—U.S. oppression."

The latter slogan cuts pretty close. Saudi detention of U.S. citizens is made possible by U.S. protection of the Saudi regime. Furthermore, official U.S. conduct in these cases has been appalling. Supporters of the Roushes and Radwan were outraged by the State Department's dismissal of these as "custody" cases, a position affirmed by spokesman Richard Boucher on July 12. Boucher commented, "We've got cases that are very difficult for families involving Germany and Austria and Saudi Arabia, and there are many others." But Germany and Austria do not prevent grown women from leaving the country.

The real scandal in these cases is the attitude of U.S. diplomats. American citizens expect their diplomats to protect them and their interests, and view U.S. embassies as a safe haven. In Saudi Arabia, this turns out to be unrealistic. Thus, Pat Roush initially received diplomatic and moral support for her daughters from Ray Mabus, then U.S. ambassador in Riyadh, who secured a ban on the issuing of visas to her ex-husband's family. But Mabus's successor, Clinton appointee Wyche Fowler Jr., reversed course. Before being posted to the kingdom, Fowler was a senator from Georgia. Now he is chairman of the board of the Middle East Institute, a Saudi lobbying front. Fowler has careened around Washington denouncing Pat Roush's defenders as liars.

It is appalling to consider how cordially the United States treats Saudi citizens, while the Saudi authorities trample the rights of American citizens who happen to be young women. On the roster of unresolved Saudi issues—along with the promiscuous issuance of visas and Riyadh's failure to investigate thoroughly its own terrorist entanglements—the release of American citizens held against their will should remain close to the top. ♦

*Stephen Schwartz is senior policy analyst at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies in Washington, D.C.*



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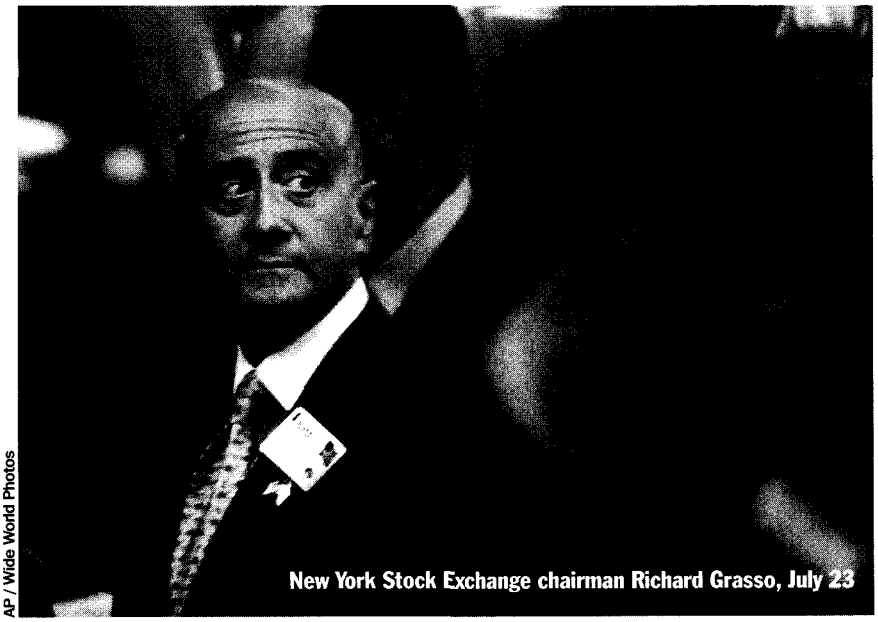
# The Dow of Congress

## An alternative theory of why the market collapsed.

BY JAMES K. GLASSMAN & JOHN R. LOTT JR.



AP / Wide World Photos

New York Stock Exchange chairman Richard Grasso, July 23

EVEN AFTER its 489-point rally last Wednesday, the stock market's recent performance remains dismal. What's wrong? The economic news is good, if not great. Earnings have been better than expected, with positive surprises outnumbering negative by four to one. Interest rates remain among the lowest in history, and Fed chairman Alan Greenspan has indicated he won't raise them soon. While terrorism remains a threat, no attacks have occurred on U.S. soil in 10 months.

That leaves the accounting scandals. Or does it?

The last significant revelation—that WorldCom, Inc., had overstated its earnings by $3.8 billion—came on June 25, nearly a month ago. The next morning, the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell nearly 300 points, then rallied into the afternoon and the next day.

Since then, stocks have fallen almost relentlessly. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped on 15 of the 19 days between the close of trading on June 27 and the close last Thursday. Despite the huge jump on July 24, the Dow is still off 12 percent in this short period. Consider, by contrast, the decline of the market during the entire period when the worst accounting scandals were unmasked. A good starting date is last November 8, when Enron announced that its financial statements from 1997 to 2001 "should not be relied upon." Then came Adelphia, Tyco, Global Crossing, ImClone, Xerox, WorldCom, and more. Nevertheless, between November 8 and June 26—the period of these disclosures—the Dow dropped only 3 percent.

In other words, in the past four weeks, which have been relatively scandal-free, the Dow has dropped four times as much as it did in the preceding scandal-ridden seven and a half months.

What's the explanation? In the past month, politicians have entered the fray, unanimously passing ill-considered, sweeping laws, driven by hysteria and misreporting. The sharp drop in the market, then, appears to be the result not so much of the accounting scandals as of the political reaction to those scandals.

It's easy to understand why Congress and the White House feel the urge to respond quickly to the pain of small investors—and to inoculate themselves against charges of coziness with fat cats. But the rush to legislate—and, in the case of President Bush, to use overheated rhetoric to condemn capitalist evildoers and to denounce the "binge" of the 1990s—only makes investors more nervous.

The suggestion is that, first, the accounting scandals are an unimaginable horror, utterly out of control; second, that the changes in the rules governing securities transactions will be broad and deep; and, third, that new costs will be loaded onto corporations already struggling to make enough profits to increase capital investment and get animal spirits flowing again. What Washington is doing is no encouragement to investors. In fact, it is scary as hell.

Things started much better. When Enron's deceptions became public—thanks to a short seller (one of the best discovery mechanisms markets have to offer)—investors simply destroyed the company and its auditing firm along with it. Such brutality was encouraging, and President Bush's swift reaction—a list of principles for new laws and regulations—focused on personal responsibility, fairness, and choice. The SEC quickly adopted its share of the proposals, and the rest were incorporated in a solid bill

*James K. Glassman and John R. Lott Jr. are scholars at the American Enterprise Institute. Glassman is also host of* www.TechCentralStation.com.



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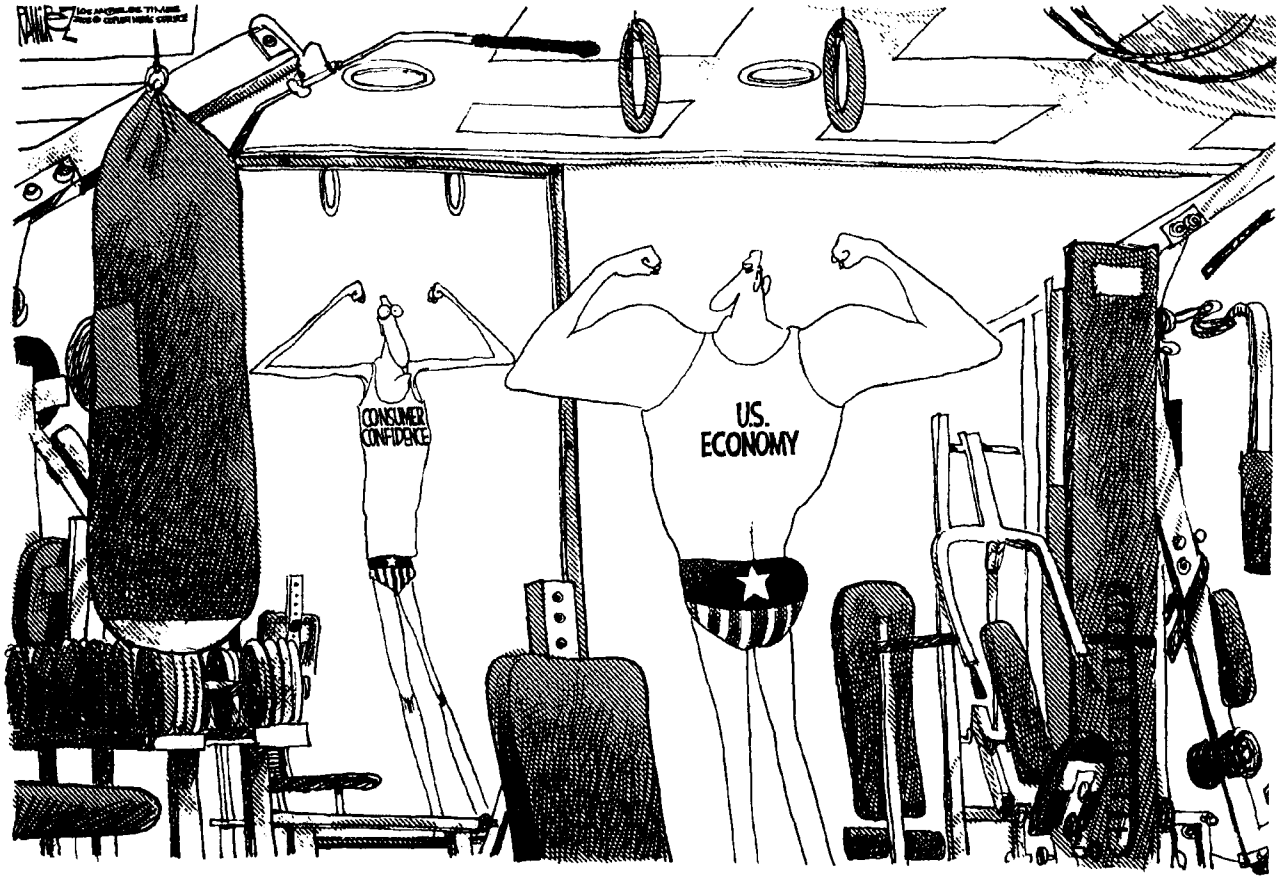
sponsored by Michael Oxley, a Republican congressman from Ohio, which passed the House, 334-90, with majorities of both parties in support. A more radical offering by Senator Paul Sarbanes, the Maryland Democrat, was considered unlikely to become law. But then came WorldCom. The Sarbanes bill passed committee easily, and, in the frantic atmosphere of the past few weeks, it zipped through the full Senate on July 15th without a dissenting vote, as did a measure boosting criminal penalties for executives.

The Sarbanes bill, which is the basis of the conference legislation President Bush will soon sign into law, sets up what amounts to a parallel SEC, with broad and vague powers. Writing last week on *Economy.com*, Richard Moody noted that "the current environment calls to mind the aftermath of the collapse of the banking system during the Great Depression." While legitimate steps helped restore confidence, "Congress also took the opportunity to impose a host of rigid and unjustified regulations on the operations of banks in the form of the Glass-Steagall Act," which took more than 60 years to repeal. Imagine the similarly unintended consequences of what the president is now set to sign.

But don't current rules make it easy for companies to deceive? Not unless they commit fraud—and we have plenty of criminal laws in that arena. In fact, U.S. markets are the cleanest in the world, as academic studies show consistently. For instance, research published last year by Christian Leuz of the Wharton School, Dhananjay Nanda of the University of Michigan, and Peter Wysocki of MIT found that U.S. firms "managed," or distorted, their earnings the least among companies in 31 countries studied. While financial markets, which rely on trust, cannot tolerate lying, the media have grossly exaggerated the extent and seriousness of accounting problems.

For example, a recent headline in the *Wall Street Journal* proclaimed, "Merck Recorded $12.4 Billion In Revenue It Never Collected." Well, yes and no. The truth is that Merck provided a rebate on drugs, and the company faced a choice: (1) record the entire value of the gross sale as revenue and list the rebate as a cost, or (2) record only the sale, net of the rebate, as revenue. Both methods produce the same profit. Merck decided to list the gross sale and the rebate separately, instead of just the net sale. That seems perfectly reasonable, and, indeed, more informative for investors. But, on the surface anyway, it's another accounting scandal.

In the face of the deluge of stories, some persist in arguing that the cause of the recent decline in the market is that investors believe politicians aren't doing enough. Alan Blinder, vice chairman of the Federal Reserve during the Clinton administration, wrote in the *New York Times* on July 21, "Can it be true that finan-




Michael Ramirez



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cial markets want the government to regulate them more? Paradoxically, the answer is yes."

Blinder's proof is that markets were disappointed that President Bush "spoke loudly but carried a small stick in his speech to Wall Street" on July 9. In fact, Blinder has it backwards. The Bush speech more likely frightened investors because he indicated he would back the most extreme legislation that was working its way through Congress.

In the current environment, perhaps it is too much to expect politicians to stick up for the thousands of publicly traded companies that play by the rules and that have provided the United States since 1982 with the most prosperous two decades the world has ever seen. Any top manager warning about the costs of the wild new laws coming out of Congress risks being portrayed as a corporate crook himself. But a little courage would be good to see.

After vigorous lobbying, corporate executives have now been rolling over—and may soon pay the price. The new accounting reform law creates byzantine regulations where even honest managers could face prison time. Requiring them to personally "ensure" the gathering of information for financial statements may seem innocuous enough, but consider that firms must frequently refile corrected statements not because of intentional deception but because new information has come to light. Prosecutors might need only to point out two conflicting certified statements to show perjury or fraud. Making a simple mistake or being fooled by subordinates may not be enough of a defense. At the very least, CEOs will be wasting time verifying accounting statements, time better spent running a business.

The only good news is that all this bad political news may now have been fully taken into account by investors. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for misguided laws, whose effects can linger for decades—as, alas, can misguided politicians. ♦

# U.N. Stands for Unconscionable

## Bush was right to cut off funding for the U.N. Fund for Population Activities. BY J. BOTTUM

AP / Wide World Photos

*The Peruvian government pressured 300,000 poor women into being sterilized in the 1990s.*

When Colin Powell announced last Tuesday the administration's decision to shift to other organizations $34 million earmarked for the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, the reaction was apoplectic. "Bush Denies Women Health Care, Human Rights," read one editorial headline. "The World's Women Left in the Lurch," read another—and on and on: "Abortion Foes Win Counterproductively," "'W' stands for Wrongheaded," "Life-Saving U.N. Effort a Victim of White House Politics." Never mind that the funding was curtailed because the UNFPA supported China's gruesome policy of forced abortions.

Meanwhile, Rep. Carolyn Maloney of New York denounced the Republicans' "mindless zeal to take care of their right-wing base." Sen. Patrick Leahy railed at the decision as "an embarrassment and a travesty." And happy with the opportunity to act as moral tutor to the backward United States, the European Union voted to replace the missing money (though carefully limiting its use to 22 former European colonies, not China), citing what the E.U. Development and Humanitarian Aid commissioner, Poul Nielson, called the "decency gap" created by the Americans.

You'd think from all of this that President Bush had declared war on

*J. Bottum is Books & Arts editor of* The Weekly Standard.



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# "Uncle Sam the Lady's Man"

Uncle Sam stopped by Bedloe's Island to talk with his good friend, Lady Liberty. She came down to greet him. Neither one ever wasted the other's time.

"Lovely as ever," Sam began. "All this uncertainty over the World Trade Center, the unseemly controversy surrounding it distresses me."

"Me too, Sam. But what to do," wondered Lady Liberty.

"Just this for you to consider and alter as you see fit," Sam told her.

"Please tell, Sam," she asked.

Sam continued, "Right now you stand and have always stood on a stationary platform. Always, you look in one direction, toward the open sea and beyond. At America's main gate, you welcome to its friendly shores countless others."

"That's right. Please continue, Sam," Lady Liberty encouraged him.

"A little to the left of where you stand, with no obstruction in your line of sight, is the southern tip of Manhattan Island. Clearly to you, there stands the place where once the World Trade Center stood," said Sam.

"That's absolutely true," she replied.

"Now then, my thought is this. Have America's best engineers, its most talented artisans and finest architects rework your stationary platform on which you now stand. Let it rotate on its axis only a little to your left. You'd then be facing Manhattan's southern tip and exactly where once stood the now demolished World Trade Center. There's nothing in between to impede your vision," Uncle Sam told her.

"Wonderful so far, Sam. What's next?" she was impatient to hear.

"You're now facing in exactly the direction of the old WTC site. Once again we call upon the same professionals who modified your one-time stationary platform. Next, these same people readjust your arm," Sam said.

"Which arm?" asked Lady Liberty.

"The one that holds your torch on high," Uncle Sam told her. "Slowly your arm lowers until it's parallel to the ground. And now, the torch held in your hand points directly toward the place where the WTC stood before its devastation."

"So, Sam?" she wondered.

"So now comes the most important reason for this whole endeavor. Your torch points toward and illuminates forever the memory of and affection for every lost loved one who sacrificed their life on that terrible and tragic September 11," said Sam.

"Wonderful Sam, simply wonderful," rejoiced Lady Liberty. "And then what?"

"For a moment of silent prayer and with befitting reverence you remain there looking at where the WTC once stood with your arm extended, and your hand holding the torch pointed in that same direction. Then slowly, you return to the original position you've always had, your arm raised on high again, the torch held in your hand. You again look out as you always have in the direction of the open sea and beyond," Sam told her.

"And then?"

"Every morning at or near 9:00 am, when the terrorists struck the WTC, you repeat this identical procedure, from position one to position two and return to position one again," Sam told her.

"It's so simple, Sam, so loving, so ever-lasting. Do you think it will ever really be?" she worried.

"I do. It's in keeping with America's ever youthful and fertile imagination. It's the genius of a nation and its love for one another," Uncle Sam replied.

"We'll see soon enough, Sam," said Lady Liberty, "God only knows, authors of good works succeed only if they're wise enough to place their poor hands in His."

"Amen to that," Uncle Sam concurred with Lady Liberty.

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half the globe. Indeed, UNFPA's executive director, Thoraya Obaid, insisted that he had, and that "women and children will die because of this decision." The Chinese Foreign Ministry, responding to the State Department's description of forced sterilizations and abortions in China, issued a diatribe against the United States. Chinese citizens' participation in Beijing's policy of one child per family is entirely voluntary, the Chinese ambassador to the United States insisted—and, anyway, the UNFPA is working in merely 32 counties in China, where the United Nations fund hopes to show that voluntary population controls work better than involuntary ones.

If this sounds like something of a contradiction—there's nothing coercive in China, except in those counties where UNFPA doesn't work—that's because it is. In the midst of the firestorm of criticism, almost no commentator noticed this wasn't merely politics for the Bush administration, some Machiavellian payoff to the president's pro-life supporters by Karl Rove, but a matter of principle. Powell is on record as being generally sympathetic to UNFPA, but his letter to Congress takes seriously the moral problem of American support for an agency implicated in China's coercive population policy—and the legal problem of adhering to the 1985 Kemp-Kasten law that prohibits funding of any organization that participates in coercive abortions and the 2000 Tiahrt amendment that prohibits American funds' being passed on to international organizations that support coercive contraception programs. Though you would never know it from the hysterical criticisms of self-proclaimed "pro-choicers," what Powell is upholding is the idea of choice.

"If there is a single principle that unifies Americans with conflicting views on the subject, it is the conviction that no woman should be forced to have an abortion," Powell insisted. "Regardless of the modest size of UNFPA's budget in China or any benefits its programs provide, UNFPA's support of, and involvement in, China's population-planning activities allows the Chinese government to implement more effectively its program of coercive abortion."

The UNFPA, it also bears noting, is not an admirable bureaucracy that just slipped up in China. Amidst all the hyperventilating about the supposed indecency of the United States, very little attention was paid to the damning report issued last week by the Peruvian government about UNFPA's collaboration in the ruthless—and racially motivated—sterilization of 300,000 rural and Indian women in Peru during the 1990s. Begun by President Alberto Fujimori with special legislation when he assumed dictatorial powers, the program officially registered UNFPA as its "Technical Secretary" for organizing what it called "ligation festivals."

While other international organizations grew increasingly queasy with the coercive and racial aspects of the project (even the Clinton-era U.S. Agency for International Development withdrew early in 1998), the U.N. fund "increased their support and even participation in the task . . . in the period 1995-2000." UNFPA, the Peruvian inquiry found, "brought not only special financing but also demographic goals, for the focalized reduction of the Peruvian population and the fecundity of Peruvian women."

Indeed, the UNFPA's record through the years shows an institutionalized bias in favor of brute force measures. Though official UNFPA policy prohibits the promotion of abortion, over 17 percent of the fund's annual spending is passed through to non-governmental organizations that have no such restriction. Such organizations, the former director of UNFPA, Nafis Sadik, has explained admiringly, "are willing to take risks that governments certainly won't, even U.N. organizations won't, but [national governments and the U.N.] can finance." As all parties to this debate well understand, the UNFPA is part of an interlocking directorate of national and international organizations devoted to abortion, contraception, and sterilization.

Thus, after leaving UNFPA, Sadik joined the board of directors of the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy, an organization wholly dedicated to eliminating restrictions on abortion. The official U.S. Committee for UNFPA uses as its spokeswoman Robin Chandler Duke, former president of the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League. When UNFPA launched the "United Nations Population Award" in 1983, it chose as one of its first recipients Qian Xinzhong, the minister of the Chinese State Family Planning Commission. (Later, at the end of her term as head of UNFPA, Sadik was awarded the prize herself.)

Much of the American apparatus of international agencies, non-governmental organizations, women's advocacy groups, and population-control organizations is just as deeply interconnected—and just as deeply implicated in forced abortions, coercive sterilizations, and single-minded pursuit of fewer births. All that happened last week is that the Bush administration stopped pretending to believe them when they say they aren't. ♦

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# The Arabs Meet the Enemy . . .

## Themselves.

**BY SIMON HENDERSON**

SOMETIMES the driest document can unintentionally highlight telling truths. That is the case of the "Arab Human Development Report 2002," published in July by the United Nations Development Program.

Written by a group of Arab scholars and economists, the 168-page report has been praised as an honest look in the mirror. It is an agonized academic appraisal of why, even with increased life expectancy and adult literacy, the predicament of the average Arab remains dismal. It concludes that Arab societies need more freedom, more opportunities for women, and better educational opportunities—but avoids saying that these "deficits" amount to shortages of Western values.

The report was two years in the making, so September 11 and the subsequent opening up of a U.S.-Arab divide could not have happened at a worse time, from the editors' vantage point. Just before the attacks on New York and Washington, the authors distributed a questionnaire to those attending an Arab youth conference in Amman, Jordan. The participants, from 14 of the 22 states of the Arab League, were aged 13 to 17. They were asked what their greatest concerns were, whether they would like to emigrate, and if so, where?

The dominant concerns were job opportunities and education. An astonishing 45 percent indicated a wish to emigrate, with the greatest number, the report says, choosing "North America." Since the questionnaire stated "specify country," the reader is left thinking plausibly that most specified the United States, but the Arab authors preferred not to mention the choice.

A slightly older sample of youths —15- to 20-year-olds—answered the questionnaire separately. Among them, an even greater proportion wanted to emigrate, "clearly indicating their dissatisfaction with current conditions and future prospects in their home countries." This time 46 percent chose European destinations, with 21 percent writing down "Britain," followed by 36 percent choosing "the United States and Canada," with no breakdown offered.

Again, suspicions arise that the authors wrote around what might have been a politically embarrassing conclusion. (Imagine the headline: "Arab Youths Want to Live the American Dream.") They covered themselves with the proviso, "Clearly, the responses obtained and analyzed here do not constitute a probability sample of Arab youth large enough to permit valid generalizations about the entire universe of young Arabs."

Anyone who has done much work on the Arab world will want to check the report for its statistical information. Reliable data are notoriously hard to acquire, so where better to look than a U.N.-sponsored report written by a team drawn from the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, a pan-Arab body? Don't rush. There are gaps all over the place, particularly in the final table where the authors rank countries by their Alternative Human Development Index (AHDI), which looks at education, Internet access, life expectancy, freedom, "gender empowerment," and pollution. In fact, only 14 Arab states, out of 22 including Palestine, are listed among the 111 countries in the table. For the other Arab states data were not available, or perhaps were too embarrassing to print. Peripheral states like Djibouti, the Comoros Islands, and Mauritania are there, but not Saudi Arabia.

It's this table that shows the Arab states' poor standing. Of the 111 countries, the highest-ranked Arab state is Jordan at number 68. The top positions are taken by Western European democracies, while the United States ranks eleventh. (The UNDP normally uses its own Human Development Index, or HDI, which includes the crucial variable "per capita income." By that calculation the United States comes fourth.) The U.S. AHDI is apparently dragged down by poor scores for gender empowerment (women's access to power in society) and pollution.

Whose fault is the Arab states' low ranking? At least one of the authors tries to pin it all on Israel (which does not appear in the report's final ranking but has an HDI position of twenty-second in the world). That author writes, "Israel's illegal occupation of Arab lands is one of the most pervasive obstacles to security and progress in the region geographically (since it affects the entire region), temporally (extending over decades) and developmentally (impacting nearly all aspects of human development and human security), directly for millions and indirectly for others."

But the report actually concludes that "the predominant characteristic of the current Arab reality seems to be the existence of deeply rooted shortcomings in the Arab institutional structure." It goes on: "The keys to institutional reform lie in improving political representation, civil service capacity and the rule of law." Sounds like another vote for the American way. ♦

*Simon Henderson is an adjunct scholar at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.*



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# Who Runs the FDA?

## So far, not the Bush administration.

**BY MELANA ZYLA VICKERS**

NO SOONER had a meeting of Food and Drug Administration advisers broken up in suburban Maryland on Thursday than the food-safety alarm bells began ringing on the subject of mercury in fish: "Pregnant Women Should Avoid Tuna," warned an Associated Press story on Friday. "FDA advisers urge pregnant women to limit tuna intake," added MSNBC, compounding the anxiety of a population subgroup that's already inclined to do a lot of worrying.

The worrying will prove unnecessary, however. Absolutely nothing has happened in the world of tuna, fish in general, or medicine to warrant any additions to the FDA's already-strict warnings on mercury in fish.

Rather, the FDA's three-day meeting of its food advisory committee was in response to a development that, from its perspective, was far more dangerous and significant than new data: an attack from environmental groups calling the FDA's stand on mercury weak and demanding that it be revised.

Instead of standing by the scientific integrity of its highly publicized January 2001 warning that pregnant women should protect their babies by not eating any shark, swordfish, king mackerel, or tilefish and by limiting consumption of any other fish to about the equivalent of two tuna cans weekly, the FDA obliged the activist groups. It set up the meeting, and will in the coming months launch some scientific studies on tuna to add to the annual monitoring it does on American diets as well as change the wording of its fish advisory. This last action is the one that is getting the attention, yet it's perhaps the least significant of all: Where the FDA now tells women they "can safely eat 12 ounces (two small cans) per week of cooked fish, . . . shellfish, canned fish, small ocean fish . . . just pick a variety of species," it will in future use the word "tuna" explicitly—just in case critics are right that consumers don't think "tuna" when they read "canned fish."

The fact that the AP and MSNBC, among others, managed to misconstrue this decision as some new warning against tuna is precisely what the FDA should have worried about before caving to the pressure from activist groups. The agency was seemingly oblivious not only to the public alarm and confusion that its backpedaling could cause, but to the weak science behind the environmental groups' claims as well. What's worse, the FDA's response is but one example of the way the unsteady regulatory agency, operating without a commissioner since the beginning of the Bush administration, has tilted toward political pressure and away from scientific rigor.

Getting the FDA over a barrel in this manner is a great victory for the Washington-based Environmental Working Group and a Public Citizen affiliate called the U.S. Public Interest Research Group Education Fund. All the more so considering how little evidence the groups have managed to muster. Their arguments are presented in two papers, one published earlier this year, the other in April 2001.

The older paper, called "Brain Food: What women should know about mercury contamination of fish," argues that the FDA's tough, clear warning is insufficient and puts women at risk. "Brain Food" is based on a Centers for Disease Control study whose dominant finding is that average mercury levels in women are not of concern. That finding didn't matter, though, because in the details of the CDC study, the environmentalist authors found their pearl: a calculation showing that 10 percent of adult women have mercury levels that exceed the levels CDC considers safe. Inspired, the activists built their objections around this minor finding in a small study that has nothing to do with pregnant women or fish and that finds no problem with 90 percent of its subjects.

Not stopping there, the Environmental Working Group followed up with a paper arguing that transcripts of FDA meetings show the agency deliberately downplayed warnings about mercury as it devised its 2001 standards. The paper, constructed wholly of selective quotations, is made of even thinner fish flakes than "Brain Food." For example, on page two, the authors string together a private citizen's speculation about links between mercury and Attention-Deficit Disorder in her child with an FDA scientist's vague response. The authors imply falsely that the FDA makes a link between the controversial disorder and fish contamination.

The Environmental Working Group then goes on to exaggerate the CDC figure of 10 percent of women of childbearing age being at risk of elevated methylmercury levels. The group represents it as "ten percent of American women enter pregnancy with elevated methylmercury levels."

For the purposes of getting the

*Melana Zyla Vickers is a senior fellow at the Independent Women's Forum and a columnist at* TechCentralStation.com. *Her research paper on this topic is available at* IWF.org.



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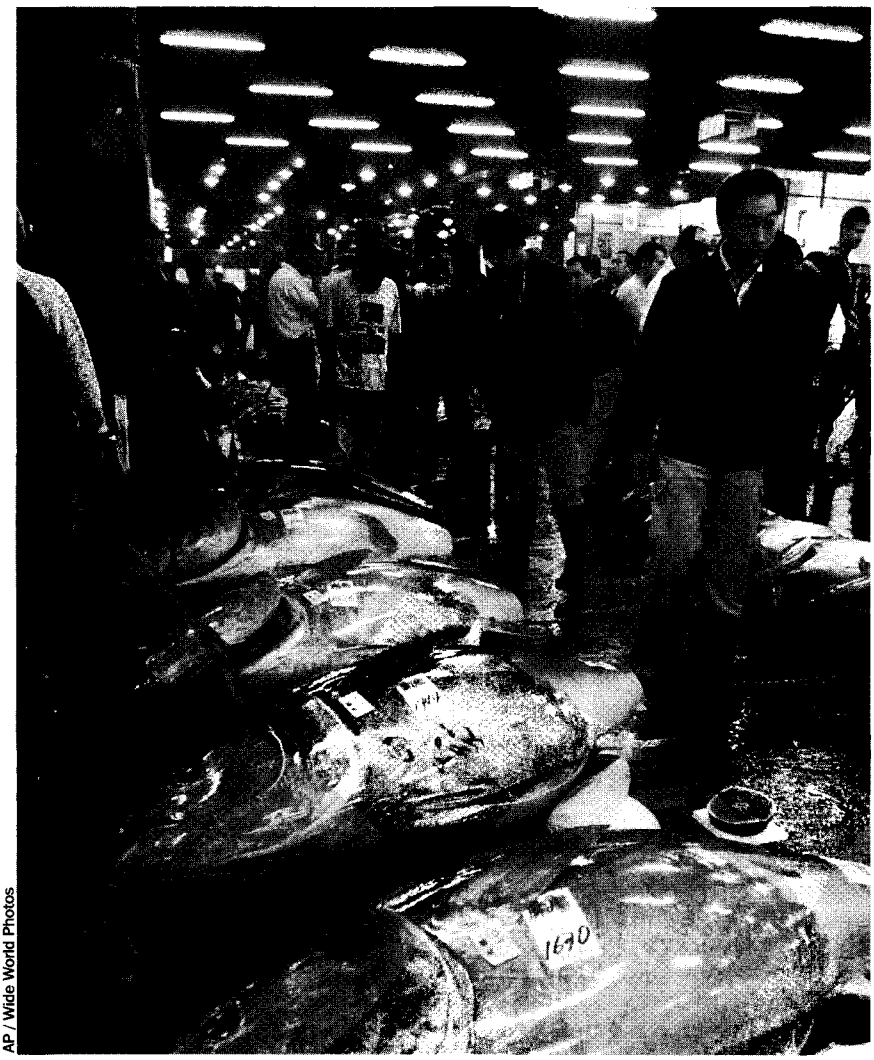


AP / Wide World Photos

*Eat up! Tuna for sale at Tokyo's Tsukiji Fish Market.*

FDA bureaucracy to act, though, the quality of the analysis in the deadly fish reports didn't matter. After wire services and the nation's major newspapers carried the scare reports prominently, some on page one, political pressure mounted. By March 2002, the FDA had agreed to review its own brand-new advice, and with last week's decisions slid further still.

American women and indeed anyone who eats fish would have been far better served by an FDA working to hold its ground—with explanations of why the standards are tough enough, challenges to the rigor of the activist groups' research, and efforts to lay at the feet of Public Citizen and the Environmental Working Group the blame for confusing the public. That's a job for a politically appointed commissioner, someone who can dish out the heat rather than just take it.

The FDA rollover on mercury is reminiscent of another instance in which the agency has been bullied and Public Citizen has been involved. Namely, the false accusation that since 1993, when the FDA began charging user fees for pharmaceutical companies to get drugs approved, the regulatory agency has let a record number of deadly drugs slip into the market. The diabetes drug Rezulin and the diet pill Redux come to mind. The deadly drugs claim has been so widely covered—not least by a 13,000-word article in the *Los Angeles Times* in late 2000—that it has gained the veneer of respectability, scaring Americans away from new drug therapies.

Yet it's baloney. Between 1993 and 2000, nine new drugs were withdrawn for reasons of health risk, out of 259 drugs that were approved. That's a 3.5 percent withdrawal rate, and it's actually lower than the 4.1 percent withdrawal rate before user fees. Between 1985 and 1992, seven of 170 new drugs were withdrawn for reasons of health risk.

FDA insiders say they try to educate the public about such misrepresentation. They claim, for instance, that reporters who call about the drug approvals are always told the withdrawal rates have been lower, or similar, since user fees began. That doesn't come through in the mainstream coverage, though, suggesting the FDA's public-education efforts are no match for the aggressive tactics and media-darling status of the agency's detractors.

Activist groups aren't the only ones giving the FDA a trouncing. In June, a congressional committee sought to grill the agency about a controversial cancer drug called Erbitux, developed by ImClone Systems Inc. Since the FDA has no commissioner, lower-ranking FDA officials had to face the blast. By rights, these officials should be left to occupy themselves with the science of drug approvals, not the politics.

To be sure, the absence of a leader at the helm isn't the only reason the FDA is yawing. FDA insiders say that activist groups have their share of sympathizers within the agency and that the groups have been clearing paths of influence at the FDA for over 20 years. The mercury offensive is then just more of the same, and Public Citizen et al. are sure to redouble their efforts when the agency gets a commissioner rather than to go quietly. And if the FDA continues to wobble, it's going to be a bad time for worried pregnant women—and other Americans who rely on the agency for safe, speedy drug approvals and reliable information on the safety of medical treatments and food. ♦



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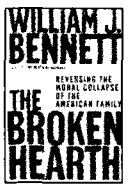


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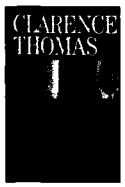


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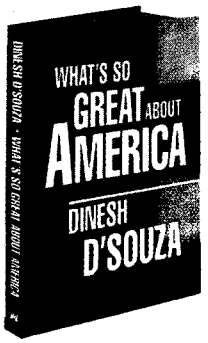


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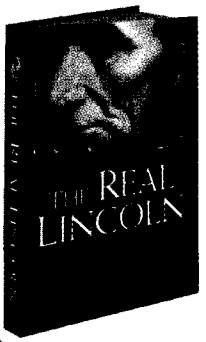


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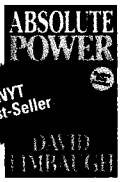


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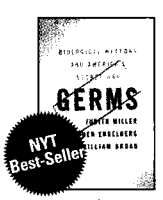


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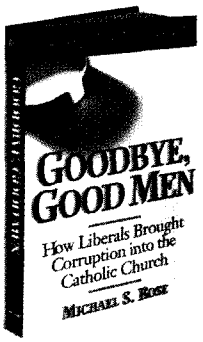


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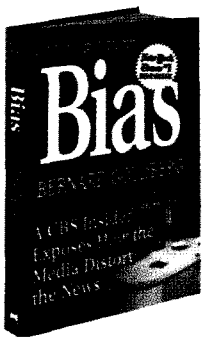


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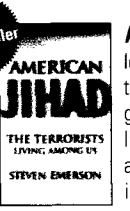


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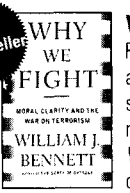


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# The Next Kennedy

*Kathleen Kennedy Townsend's campaign for the Maryland statehouse . . . and beyond.*

**By Matt Labash**

*Baltimore*

On a June afternoon, the streets of Baltimore sweat like the inside of a humidifier. But the shirt-clinging stickiness does not hamper Maryland's lieutenant governor, Kathleen Kennedy Townsend. As befits a member of the tribe of Robert F. Kennedy (now 51, Kathleen is his oldest child), she has no discernible body fat and is an avid outdoorswoman who once climbed the Matterhorn in the snow. At the rundown Arena Playhouse, she plows through the door, all thatch and teeth and factory-issue Kennedy vigor.

Trailing behind her is Maryland's fireplug senator Barbara Mikulski, as well as Martin Sheen, a longtime friend of the Kennedy family, who is introduced as "the real president" since he plays a tastefully liberal commander in chief on television's *The West Wing*. Both are campaigning for Townsend in her quest to become Maryland's next governor this fall. The lobby fills with well-wishers and journalists. In broken English, a Japanese reporter asks Townsend how it feels to be regarded as one of the only successes left in the Kennedy family. She cocks her head, then affectionately cups his face. "I guess it's better than the alternative," she says. "No success."

Inside, the teenage members of an inner-city after-school dance/theater troupe go through their warm-up paces. Townsend's head juts up and down like a fishing bob, as the sound system blasts Michael Jackson. Not every Kennedy campaign would welcome a reporter from a conservative political magazine to watch its candidate's every move. But as I run into Alan Fleischmann, Townsend's personable chief of staff, he acts as if they've just won a contest. "We're delighted you're writing about Kathleen," he says, directing my attention to a recent *National Review* piece that praised the scandal-free, moderate Townsend as a Kennedy conservatives "do not have to abhor."

Around Annapolis, Fleischmann is known as everything from "Rasputin" to "The Nanny" for his interjections and interceptions whenever difficult questions, and sometimes not so difficult ones, are directed his boss's way. One wouldn't expect to find him in action here. First, this is a low-pressure gig, a goodwill tour in which Townsend is supposed to introduce Sheen while taking victory laps for funding this particular after-school program. Second, this is the ideal Kennedy milieu, with all the celebrities and chipper, at-risk children.

After her introduction, Sheen takes the stage. He talks to the amateur thespians gathered at his feet about their "craft," trying awkwardly to speak their language: Shakespeare, he says, "is like the rap of its day." As Sheen expounds on his MC Shakespeare theory, Townsend's eyes dart nervously and habitually to Fleischmann, who, like a third-base coach, gives her visual and verbal cues, though none seem necessary since the only task at hand is not falling off the stage.

As the program concludes, Sheen and Townsend take a seat on the floor, surrounded by the children, who sing-shout a spiritual, "Hosanna, Forever We Worship You." A devout Catholic who often discusses matters spiritual, Townsend shows no concern over the commingling of church and state. She and Sheen join in, attempting to clap with the children. The children clap. Then the visitors clap. One girl tries to give Sheen an on-the-spot rhythm tutorial, until the hopeless Sheen collapses in laughter. But Townsend doesn't even notice. She lumbers along in erratic clip-clops like a wounded Clydesdale, happily off the beat.

In many ways, Townsend has spent her entire life clapping off the beat. She became the only Kennedy to lose an election when she ran for Congress two years after moving to Maryland in 1986. In a family where everyone was expected to wait their turn, but females never got one, she is the only Kennedy woman to hold elective office—as Parris Glendening's lieutenant governor since 1994. Then there are the nicknames differentiating her from the rest of the clan, everything from "Clean Kathleen" to "The Nun," which the married mother of four briefly considered becoming.

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Of all the RFK idolaters—more than her siblings, more even than Arthur Schlesinger Jr.—Kathleen is said to hold her father dearest. Sixteen years old when he was killed, she was mature enough to know that she lost not just a dad, but what one biographer described as the Kennedy who most defined Kennedyness. She was old enough to appreciate his civil rights stances, his melancholic post-JFK soul-searching, his strict regimen requiring his children to recite current events and poetry at dinner, and his exhilarating adventures in which he'd lead his brood hurtling down ski slopes, through white-water rapids, and along a backyard zipwire set up by Uncle Jack's Green Berets at Hickory Hill, the Bobby Kennedy estate in McLean, Virginia.

Kathleen was also cognizant of how far her family fell, when, after her father's death, her mother Ethel melted down, losing all semblance of control over Kathleen's wayward siblings. The family's numerous animals, including a pet pig, were allowed to defecate indoors. Her late brother Michael (who died skiing into a tree) was known to answer the phone with the words, "Confusion here." Many of her brothers became so trouble-prone and drug-addled (David died of a heroin overdose in 1984) that Aunt Jackie made efforts to keep her children far away.

As Townsend told the authors of *Growing Up Kennedy* in 1983: "There was great pressure from Daddy on us to do well. Mummy just couldn't do that. She had her hands full just bringing them up. He was someone you could turn to, play with, and talk to. . . . After he was gone, the atmosphere changed. Basically, there are two aspects to being a Kennedy. The first is that the family has been given a lot and should give a lot in return. The second is that the Kennedys are famous. Without Daddy, the focus tended more to the second."

By all accounts, Townsend handled the pressure and the grief as well as or better than anyone in the family. She internalized the RFK creed ("a Kennedy never cries"), along with the words of Hickory Hill's house poet, Aeschylus: "In our sleep, pain that cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart, and in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom to us by the awful grace of God."

"She was very grown-up by 16," says RFK speechwriter Adam Walinsky, a longtime friend who talked with Kathleen the night before the funeral. "She was looking around, trying to make sense of this spiritually, politically, in every other way. That's a tough way to grow up. You've given your father over to public service, then he gets murdered. That's not a prescription for a stable childhood. It seems to her enormous credit that she came through absolutely solid. I've never heard her complain."

But even if Townsend's predominant selling points are her stoicism and moral rectitude (she spent the weeks after her father's death, in tribute to him, teaching children on a Navajo reservation), she has become the 7-Up of politics: Like the refreshing soft drink nicknamed the "Un-Cola," Townsend has been called the "Un-Kennedy," defined not by what she is, but what she isn't. As Kennedy-watchers will note, Townsend has not parked any dates at the bottom of Poucha Pond (Uncle Teddy). She has not slept with a

Illustration by Zak Pullen



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14-year-old babysitter (brother Michael), had a messy divorce (brother Joe), or a nasty drug habit (brother Bobby). She has not been accused of raping anyone on a beach (cousin Willie), murdering anyone with a golf club (cousin Michael Skakel), or throwing a security guard through a metal detector, trashing a yacht, and acting like an all-purpose ass (cousin Patrick).

In most families, not doing these things would merely be considered a baseline indicator of fitness for office. In the Kennedy family, it's considered nothing to sneeze at. "She enjoys all the benefits of the Kennedy name," says one family intimate, "but she doesn't have the baggage, because she's not one of the womanizing, alcoholic men."

Instead, what Townsend is, is unremarkable. She serves in a medium-sized, unremarkable state where she occupies an unremarkable position (Maryland's constitution bars the lieutenant governor from assuming any duties not delegated by the governor). In a family in which even the runts are renowned for their charisma, hers is considered average. "It's not that she's colorless," former White House counsel Lanny Davis once said. "But she is not colorful. She is normal." Still, for all her unremarkableness, a remarkable thing has happened: Deservedly or not, Townsend seems to be on everybody's short list for stardom.

Since the day she was elected on the ticket of her patron Glendening (who didn't know her well at the time—she had served in unremarkable positions in the Maryland Department of Education and the Clinton Justice Department), she has been considered a favorite to become governor. ("Go for it!" said Oprah.) At the Democratic Leadership Council, where they mint triangulated, third-way politicians, president Al From called her "among the brightest young stars in the New Democrat movement." Bill Clinton himself speculated that "maybe someday I'll be knocking on doors for her when she's running for national office."

That someday seems to be inching ever nearer. Not only was Townsend regularly touted throughout 2000 as vice-presidential material ("Bobby's girl could lead Al Gore to the White House," panted one headline), but she is already being mentioned as a VP frontrunner for 2004. That is, if it's not beneath her. In magazines from *Newsweek* to *Parade*, Townsend has even been discussed in the same hallowed breaths as Hillary Clinton as a possibility to become our first female president. Former DNC chair Ed Rendell has already expressed hope that he will end up "chief of staff in the Townsend White House."

All these premature coronations have left many longtime Townsend-watchers in Maryland baffled. Says a reporter who's covered her for years, "There's a real disconnect between her national reputation and that in the state, where it's quite mixed." Indeed, many are asking a nagging question before Kennedy groupies are permitted to hand over the nation's car keys: Regardless of whether Townsend can fend off her Republican challenger, four-term congressman Bob Ehrlich, is she qualified to be governor?

For a Kennedy, there are few friendlier places to give a speech than the Council House in Prince George's County. Maryland, it should be noted, is commonly referred to as a Democratic state of middle temperament. Democrats enjoy a 2-to-1 registration advantage, and no Republican governor has been elected here since Spiro Agnew in 1966. Even so, Republicans can make it interesting by picking off moderates, as in 1994, when they reduced the Glendening/Townsend ticket to squeaking by on a margin of 6,000 votes.

To win, Ehrlich's camp figures it must not only beat Townsend in 21 of 24 counties, but also chip away her overwhelming margins in the liberal bulkhead population centers of Baltimore, Montgomery County, and Prince George's. Townsend, like any good Democrat or Kennedy, is banking on bringing out the elderly, the women, and African Americans.

With all the elderly, black women in the day room of the Council House retirement complex, Townsend's victory seems a foregone conclusion. Beside a Heimlich chart instructing seniors how to dislodge food that might go down the wrong pipe during a spirited bingo game, a poster announces, "The next governor of Maryland comes to Council House." The crowd is a swirl of rose perfume, peach-tinted glasses, and oversized earrings. I plunk down at a table of senior women, asking if they know who's running against Townsend. "We don't really care," says one. "I've always been with the Kennedy family. I'm just sorry the other one got killed in a plane crash—I had great hopes for him."

A procession of 17 local Democratic officials take the podium for the requisite pandering. When Townsend finally arrives after getting hung up in traffic, she apologizes with convincing sincerity to the patient seniors, who are looking forward to being served a slice of Camelot along with their light refreshments. Any Kennedy in election season knows to sprinkle in plenty of ancestral references, but Townsend skips to the money shot in her opening line: "I'm sorry I'm late. I have to tell you that my grandmother Rose always said be on time. She's looking down from heaven right now, and she's not pleased." The seniors, naturally, are.

Townsend has come to launch her prescription drug initiative, which promises to reduce the cost of medications for uninsured seniors by at least 28 percent. As she



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AP / Wide World Photos

*Kathleen Kennedy (third from right) in a 1966 family photo at Hickory Hill*

finishes her spiel, voters reciprocate with hugs and origami flowers they've made during craft time. Just for sport, I sidle up to Townsend, armed with yesterday's *Baltimore Sun*, in which a chain drugstore lobbyist decries the plan as untenable for pharmacies since it would reimburse only 90 percent of the drugs' costs. When I ask her about it, I expect her to shoo me like a fly with a boilerplate response, since I know nothing about the subject, and this is one of her pet campaign initiatives. She has surely anticipated most criticisms—or at least the ones from yesterday's paper.

Instead, her infectious smile does a slow fade. She looks as if she's just been asked to hand over her lunch money. She fumbles for words, saying her campaign has worked with lots of pharmacists, that they've really reached out, that, "Uh, basically, you know what, I can talk to you. But if you're really trying to get background, why don't you go ahead and talk to [one of her aides]." At that moment, a young, statistics-spewing aide snatches me aside and fills me in on cash-and-carry markets, dispensing fees, volume increases, and other specifics that neither I, nor Townsend, it appears, know anything about.

I am satisfied with her aide's answer, and don't plan to press the issue, when a few minutes later Townsend's press secretary, Len Foxwell, approaches me, saying, "Can I give Kathleen another chance to answer that question? She was distracted over there." I have been asked for many favors by political staffs over the years: to keep their member on background, to send them a copy of a piece in which they're quoted, to never call again. But I've not been asked for a mulligan. "Uhh, yeah, okay, I guess," I assent.

Anxious for her to "close the loop" on her do-over, Foxwell grabs Townsend, whispers some talking points, and sends her back my way. Scratching her head tentatively like someone who has just crammed for an oral exam, Townsend begins, "On the record, you want to ask the question, 'How are we going to pay for this?'" Actually, we were on the record the first time, but yes. Foxwell helpfully restates the question. "First of all, wait," she says shakily, "We're the richest state [pause, start over], highest family income state in the country, one of the lowest child poverty rates, I think we can find in our budget the $8 million to pay for this."

Because of Townsend performances like this, Bob Ehrlich, a moderate Republican from a lunchbucket suburban district in Baltimore, is licking his chops. He has challenged her to debate early and often, and when I ask her if she has any plans to debate, she says she does, but that they first have to get through primary season (she's running unopposed). Even Townsend laughs when Foxwell adds, "Ross Pierpont is a dogged campaigner."

Pierpont is Ehrlich's Republican competition, if you can call him that. He is an 84-year-old retired physician and fringe candidate who has run for nearly every office in the state and has lost, by his own estimate, "19 or 20" straight elections. He has lost to the best, and lost to the worst, and of those, he says Townsend "is the most inept candidate by a wide margin. She's an airhead of the first order. She's a trained bear. She has two or three people around her . . . I call them the 'babysitters' . . . telling her to open her mouth, to shut her mouth, to wave her arms. It's like training a bear."

To drive his point home, Pierpont has published an 18-page pamphlet entitled "Save Our State from the Costs and Consequences of More Kennedy Incompetence." He also releases Townsend's office personnel directory, which lists 15 people, by far the largest staff a Maryland lieu-



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tenant governor has ever employed. In fact, Townsend may be the only lieutenant governor in America to have a chief of staff, an assistant chief of staff, and two deputy chiefs of staff. Once when she met with the *Frederick News-Post*'s editorial board, she showed up with so many staffers that the editors asked half of them to stand outside.

Here, it seems prudent to point out that Townsend graduated magna cum laude from Harvard, has a law degree, is an avid history reader, is married to David Townsend, a reputedly brilliant tutor in the St. John's College great books program, and has herself authored several thoughtful articles on religion, virtue, and voluntarism for the *Washington Monthly* going back 20 years. In short, Townsend is not stupid, though she often plays it on TV.

Earlier this year, when trying to make a good showing at the Preakness Stakes, she enthused to Baltimore's WBAL radio about the prospects of "Warmonger" (as opposed to "War Emblem," the name by which the Kentucky Derby winner is known to most). Asked to recount her favorite play after the Baltimore Ravens won the Super Bowl last year, she said, "I loved it when we made that football. The Giants had just made a football, and we came right back." Standing up for his boss, purportedly an alum of innumerable touch-football games at Hickory Hill, Alan Fleischmann said the noise on the field made it hard for Townsend to hear: "She knows football better than anyone I know. This is a woman who loves football."

But Townsend doesn't get into trouble only when she's talking sports. Two years ago, at an address to Hispanic activists, she spoke of the need to hire people who "speak Hispanish" because "Hispanic is an important language to learn." While addressing gay-rights supporters, she referred to a nearby statue of Thurgood Marshall as a "statute." Twice. One reporter wrote of having to explain to her what the word "fatalist" meant. Another wrote of her lip visibly quivering when he pressed her for her position on slot machines (her staff told him she hadn't been feeling well that morning).

To be sure, Townsend has improved a great deal since she arrived on the political scene. Once a dowdy dresser with thick glasses, she has gotten contacts and smartened up her look. In 1986, when running for Congress, she came off like a frolicking puppy, literally jogging door to door. (She was stomped by Helen Delich Bentley, a salty former journalist who dismissed as "crap" claims that the carpetbagging Townsend wasn't simply running on her family name.) In the spirit of her grandmother Rose, a perfectionist who used to return Townsend's childhood letters with red-penned grammatical corrections, Townsend has worked with speech coaches (she denies this when I ask her about it, until I indicate her staffers have already let the cat out of the bag).

Consequently, she is a maddeningly erratic performer. One day, she'll be flawless on Larry King or at the National Press Club. The next, she'll muck up the announcement of her running mate, retired Adm. Charles Larson—a party-switching Republican and former superintendent of the Naval Academy—by calling him "Lawson."

For Townsend's critics, recounting such gaffes has proven hard to resist. But Republicans are leery of drawing attention to them because of "the George W. and Lazio problems": Making hay over a Democrat's verbal mishaps while George W. Bush is president might be a doubtful "strategery." Rick Lazio, meanwhile, proved it is unwise to hit a woman. When he started beating up Hillary Clinton, a much less sympathetic figure than Townsend, in their Senate race, his numbers went south.

For the moment, the Ehrlich camp is left with a platform light on specifics (they say those are coming), and what Democratic state delegate Mike Busch, an Ehrlich friend and Townsend supporter, calls Ehrlich's "I'm not KKT" theme. ("If you don't want to see another 'President Kennedy'," Ehrlich's fund-raising letter warns, "I need your immediate support.") Indeed, the Ehrlich camp is rejoicing after Townsend's first ad, which they call the "Kathleen Created Maryland and On The Seventh Day She Rested" spot.

As Ehrlich's let-it-fly spokesman Paul Shurick says, "I was afraid she was going to run around saying, 'I had nothing to do with this administration.' Now that she's taking credit for being in the wheel room, we're going to start attacking her on Maryland's problems. If she created Maryland, she created all of it, not just the good stuff."

Team Ehrlich has already begun tethering Townsend to her boss's excesses, such as the $900-million budget shortfall Maryland now faces, partly as a result of Glendening's profligate spending. For most Democrats, Townsend cannot run away fast enough. "I don't think *Glendening* wants to align himself with Glendening," says one. It would be hard to overstate just how unpopular the governor is. A technocrat without a personal touch, he is so boring that while other politicians had sandwiches named after them at an Annapolis deli, Glendening requested that his name be given to a Healthy Choice baked potato. Perceived as a classic big-spending liberal ("Parris Spendening" is a nickname), he's prone to flip-flops, and has ended his otherwise colorless tenure by ditching his wife of 25 years, then marrying one of his key aides. In a survey a few years ago measuring gubernatorial popularity, Glendening finished last, right behind Arizona's Fife Symington, who at the time was facing a 23-count indictment.

Here, however, Townsend (or her aides) has displayed considerable political skill. For eight years, she has



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AP / Wide World Photos

*Gladhanding at an NAACP forum in Baltimore, July 18, 2002*

remained a loyal foot soldier, while preserving her neoliberal poster girl status and absorbing almost none of the governor's negatives. In the 1998 campaign, it was Townsend who, in many ways, saved Glendening's bacon. Because she is so likable, she was front and center, even in his biographical ads. Her family's out-of-state fund-raising network ensured money flowed like water. (One local Dem says Townsend is a fund-raising "piranha"—she reportedly hit Clinton pal Nate Landow up for cash on the way to Al Gore Sr.'s funeral.)

Most important, when their campaign was floundering, it was Townsend who brought in longtime Kennedy hit man Robert Shrum. Three weeks before Election Day, Shrum cut ads portraying their Republican competitor Ellen Sauerbrey as a racist for voting against a "civil rights bill" that not only wasn't a civil rights bill but had even been voted against by the black House speaker. No matter, African Americans turned out in droves and voted for Glendening-Townsend by a 9-to-1 margin, deciding the election.

In her occasional articles for the *Washington Monthly*, the first of them years before she entered public life, Townsend has displayed bold, contrarian impulses, thumping the left for being anti-religious, as well as for secularizing lefty icons like her father when it was precisely his religious faith that lent him his moral vision. As *Monthly* founder Charlie Peters, a Townsend fan and mentor, says, "She is smart like Jack, and has Bobby's passion. Liberals typically pissed all over religion. She [took them on], and at a time when it was still very unfashionable to do so." (To those who assume all this was the work of Kennedy family wordsmiths, I'd say show me a Kennedy speechwriter who defends the Religious Right.)

But in her political life, she has displayed very little of the same moral courage. For her loyalty to Glendening, she has been thrown an endless bounty of feel-good puppy treats. She offers something not to offend everybody, taking bold stands against auto theft, drunk driving, teenage heroin use, and "domestic violence in the workplace." Likewise, Townsend is for child-safety seats, improving our state sewage systems, and having students read lots of books.

Occasionally, she takes an apparently principled stand. She has emphatically nixed Ehrlich's "slots for tots" proposal, for instance, an effort to boost Maryland's ailing horse racing industry by installing slot machines at the track, then using part of the proceeds to fund education. Townsend says this will increase crime and moral degeneracy, which is fine, but not logically consistent with Maryland's state lottery and endorsement of everything from Keno to video poker.

When Townsend has already staked out a position on a serious issue, she's displayed a knack for convenient election-year fence-sitting. Unlike most of her family, she has long supported the death penalty. But she recently encouraged Glendening to call for a moratorium until a University of Maryland study could be completed to see whether executions were racially skewed. The result: a delayed execution of a black purse-snatcher who shot a woman in the head in front of her two grandchildren, and whose guilt has never been questioned.

To be sure, Glendening has granted more responsibility to Townsend than is entrusted to the average lieutenant governor. Paying constant tribute to St. Luke's admonition that from him to whom much is given, much is required, Townsend has been a fanatical booster of voluntarism and service to one's country (at one point in the '80s, she came out for reinstating a peace-time draft, which she said should include women). She has been a driving force behind mandating character education and community service for public high schoolers. Though the latter is often derided as "compulsory volunteerism," and the former as exercises like drawing pictures of Smokey the Bear, most people find her rhetoric agreeable, and at the very least, it won't hurt her.



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But in good neoliberal fashion, her flagship issue and campaign-résumé-enhancer has been crime. Here, she has met with qualified successes and spectacular failures. Her Police Corps program, the brainchild of RFK speechwriter Adam Walinsky, is modeled after Uncle Jack's Peace Corps. It attempts to draw college graduates into police work in exchange for college tuition. The program has received generally positive reviews, even if participation has been anemic.

Townsend also boasts of her HotSpots program, which she claims has reduced crime in dangerous areas by allocating more police and community resources to pockets where crimes occur disproportionately. Others aren't convinced. Last year, Baltimore's lauded police chief Edward Norris, under whom homicides have dropped below 300 a year (in a city with 60,000 drug addicts), derided HotSpots as a "failed policy" that distracted police from surgically addressing crime as they saw fit.

Baltimore's Democratic mayor, Martin O'Malley, who's criticized Townsend for her "vacuum of leadership," also derided HotSpots as being "more effective as a jobs program" than a crime-fighting measure. O'Malley, a young, good-looking political comer who displays RFK-style feistiness when it comes to picking fights with his own party, was Townsend's last serious Democratic rival. But like other state Dems who couldn't match Townsend's 3-to-1 fund-raising advantage or 98 percent name ID, the mayor elected not to run. (A good thing, too, says Ehrlich spokesman Shurick: "O'Malley is a political stud. He could out-Kennedy a Kennedy. I think we would lose badly to him.")

If there has been one unmitigated disaster on Townsend's watch, it is her stewardship of the state's juvenile justice system, her chief responsibility. Since 1997, Townsend has championed military-style boot camps to deal with young offenders. Late in 1999, the *Baltimore Sun*, after a year-long investigation, began relentlessly detailing abuses prevalent throughout the system. The camps teemed with anecdotes of wardens beating teenage inmates, of rampant drug use among graduates (one teenager was photographed with a needle in his arm), and of skyrocketing recidivism.

Townsend was first notified of all this in August 1999, at which time she told the head of the juvenile justice agency (a Glendening appointee) to make sure any violence stopped. But abuses kept occurring right up to the time the *Sun*'s series was published in December. Townsend said she was sickened by the reports, even as she failed to disclose the conversations she had had on the subject with the governor, citing their "zone of privacy." Meanwhile, with several investigations underway, the boot camps continued to suffer so many problems that they had to be shut down. As the *Sun* documented, however, the juvenile justice system remained an underfunded morass of incompetent bureaucrats and corrupt administrators overseeing decrepit facilities rife with violence, staff-sanctioned fight clubs, and inmate suicides.

While there have been some cosmetic improvements, and Townsend has said, "I take responsibility," her numerous critics would like to know how exactly she's done so. "She did nothing noble here," says one source intimately involved in the story. "She really did not handle it. It was taken over by Glendening right away. It was his flack and their office who took over damage control. Where she really fell down in the first place was that she never followed up, she didn't make the phone calls."

Nobody thinks that juvenile justice is going to be a make-or-break issue in the campaign. Still, Townsend's performance has given fodder to her critics, many of them Republicans in the General Assembly who say she's been largely AWOL during legislative sessions throughout her tenure. For good reason, they say: She has no real grasp of the issues. Delegate Jim Ports says that the Democratic leadership bends over so far backwards to protect her that on one of the rare occasions when she came before his ways and means committee, the Democratic chair said, "She's going to come and testify, but she doesn't have time to answer any questions."

"We all know that's a front," says Ports. "That's saying she's too inept to answer questions." After failing to get his questions acknowledged by the chair, Ports grew so frustrated, he said, that he actually followed Townsend out into the hall. "I walked out the door, and she stood there with people ooh-ing and ah-ing over her for 25 minutes," he said. "But she didn't have time to testify."

One would expect Ports to make such noises (Townsend spokespeople have called this a "made-up story"). He is, after all, minority whip in a legislative body where Republicans are often regarded as leprous stepchildren. But even some Democrats, out of sync with a leadership that champions Townsend at every turn, make similar complaints. "She's a lightweight, but she's the best they've got," says one. "There's not one honest Democrat that would tell you that she's got any gray matter upstairs in terms of leadership. It's a joke. Everybody knows it's a joke. But what they say is, 'She's got money. She's a Kennedy. And she can win.' I feel bad, because she's a nice person. But she hasn't given me any reason to think she should be governor."

Whatever her faults, this critic grossly understates one point. Townsend is not just a nice person. She is perhaps the nicest person I've ever encountered in her line of work. She radiates



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warmth and humanity. Tagging along on a recent Ocean City campaign swing, I watch her address every girl, even the homely ones unattended by parents of voting age, as "pretty." When she finishes doing a television stand-up on the boardwalk, she doesn't just make off-air chat with the newsbabe, she also wanders over to shake the cameraman's free hand.

She is a devastatingly effective one-on-one campaigner, raising her hand like a cigar-store Indian, clamping it on the shoulder of whoever's in front of her, then listening to them and peppering them with personal questions long after most politicians would have moved on to the next prop. She has a daffy sense of humor, a not-quite-with-it-ness that makes you wonder if she is joking about her family's battle with the "Irish flu" when she walks into an Irish bar, is offered a beer from a patron, and says, "Oh, I feel right at home."

Throughout the day, there are small gaffes. At a volunteer firemen's convention, she refers to the tragic events of Nine-Eleven as those of "Seven-Eleven," before correcting herself. There are also moments of quiet grace. When extending sympathy to those who've lost family members in the line of duty, she says, "It is not true that good always comes from tragedy. And it is certainly not true that time heals all wounds. I know this from personal experience."

*Unlike the rest of the politicians in her family, who tend to rely on their "Quotable Kennedys" file, Townsend takes her legacy seriously.*

Though I'd been warned repeatedly that Townsend avoids protracted sit-downs with reporters, she readily agrees to have dinner with me and one of her aides. When I express surprise, she says, "Well, I'm hungry." Over the course of half an hour, we talk about the race. Lately she has looked more vulnerable than ever, angering black Democrats who are sore that Ehrlich picked a black running mate while she didn't. Likewise, her once formidable lead in the polls has dwindled to three points.

I tell her that Ehrlich's camp fully expects, in a close race, that she and Bob Shrum will trump up some charge that he's a racist, à la Sauerbrey in '98. Though she's called "The Nun," Townsend proves she's not above a political knife-fight. "He must have something to worry about," she says. "I'll just say there's plenty in his record for anyone to explore."

From there, our talk meanders to me (she asks as many questions as she answers), to Kennedy scandals (of her cousin Michael Skakel's recent murder conviction, all she offers is, "It was very sad for everybody"), to books. She reads quite a bit, and did not like her latest political biography. She won't allow me to print the title or author. It wouldn't be nice. But the reason she disliked it, she says, is it's too sterile, too clean. "There is ambiguity in all great people," she says. "It makes for a more interesting biography. It shows a struggle. It makes you understand what life entails."

Inevitably, we talk about her father, and the note he sent her after her uncle's assassination: *"Dear Kathleen, You seem to understand that Jack died and was buried today. As the oldest of the Kennedy grandchildren, you have a particular responsibility now. . . . Be kind to others and work for your country. Love, Daddy."*

Like most of the latest generation of political Kennedys, Townsend takes her best lines not from her own speechwriters, but from her father's. "There are a lot of things he said that I carry in my heart," she says. "We would take walks and he would quote Shakespeare or Aeschylus. He was a very serious person about who we were—what we needed to do with our lives."

Blair Lee IV, a longtime political commentator who himself hails from several generations of Maryland politicians, has also had a couple of extended chats with Townsend. Once, while they were seated at his regular lunch spot, a cook came to their table, saying that back in the kitchen a debate was raging about whether she was Bobby or Ted's daughter. "She said, 'Let me straighten that out,'" Blair recalls. "She went back to the kitchen, and shook hands with everybody there. I've had lunches with hundreds of politicians there over the years. Never had anybody worked the kitchen. There is something clearly driving her, the pressure, the memories of her father."

Unlike the rest of the politicians in her family, who tend to hit their "Quotable Kennedys" file every time a bill heads into mark-up, Townsend takes her legacy from her father seriously. Lee says this struck him when they talked about "the Bobby thing."

"I'm pretty hardboiled. But I don't think she's faking it," he says. "The rest of them are faking it. She's not. But that also raises questions about how close to the surface those nerve endings are. She's the last potential Bobby Kennedy-nominee for higher office. She's carried one helluva burden. It looks awfully heavy. But at some point, there's got to be something else. If that's why you're running for governor, you might want to reinspect. Every campaign is a crucible. You get boiled down to what you are or are not. She's never really had a job on her own. She's going to be out there naked. And for the first time in her life, she's going to have to earn it." ♦



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# Regime Change in Iran?

## *Applying George W. Bush's "liberation theology" to the mullahs*

**By Reuel Marc Gerecht**

Though Osama bin Laden, Afghanistan, Israel, and Iraq have commanded our attention since September 11, it is always good to remind ourselves that the most consequential country in the Muslim Middle East is Iran. This has been true, with a few intermissions, for a thousand years. And since the victory of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and his revolution in 1979, Iran has held center stage in *the* current Muslim drama: How will God and man interact in a modern theocratic state? Will the Western idea of individual freedom, which has been gaining ground in Iran for over a hundred years, triumph over the Islamic injunction to submit oneself to God's law in virtually all matters public and private? Would the notion of individual rights, always present in the intellectual storm that produced the Iranian revolution, congeal and allow a separation of church and state where the democratic franchise, not the Holy Law or a cleric, becomes the final arbiter of politics? And could the dictatorial dispensation of the entire Muslim Middle East—no democracy except in secular, half-European Turkey—conceivably be shattered by the state whose religious raison d'être has been the most explicit?

The Bush administration—and it is perhaps accurate here to underscore, the president himself more than his foreign-policy team—appears to be trying to grapple seriously with an American response to tyranny in the Muslim world, particularly in Iran. The president's "axis of evil" speech, his July 12 address on Iran, the subsequent delivery of this statement in Persian over Voice of America radio by the National Security Council's Zalmay Khalilzad, and the Captive Nations Week proclamation of July 17 have revealed a man who obviously believes that certain Western ideas have universal range and roots. The president, who is probably the most sincerely religious commander in chief since World War II, has stated repeatedly that faith does not countenance despotism, that Muslims, too, have the right to "liberty and justice . . . the birthright of all people."

Stepping away from the "realist" world of his father—where a vision of regional stability, not a belief in individual liberty and democracy, drove foreign policy—George W. Bush has sliced across national borders and civilizational divides with an unqualified assertion of a moral norm. The president declared, "The people of Iran want the same freedoms, human rights, and opportunities as people around the world." America will stand "alongside people everywhere determined to build a world of freedom, dignity, and tolerance. . . . America affirms . . . its commitment to helping those in captive nations achieve democracy." These are, at least to Iranian ears, truly revolutionary words for an American president. One has to go back to Woodrow Wilson to find an American leader who so clearly directs his message far outside the West. And Wilson's call for self-determination, made in the declining years of European empire, addressed collective, "national" ethnic aspirations more than the liberal rights of individuals.

Though the president's "liberation theology" is obviously a work in progress (as, if we remember, was Reagan's), the philosophical borders of the president's views are sufficiently clear that it will be difficult for those in his administration and in the media who are disturbed, if not terrified, by Bush's creed to walk back the policy. They will, no doubt, try. The State Department of Colin Powell will endeavor to introduce a bit of opaqueness into the discussion, striving to keep open the possibility, deeply cherished, it strongly appears, by the director of policy planning, Richard Haass, that U.S. and Iranian officials can somehow sit and talk. For State, sitting and talking with foreign dignitaries is usually an end in itself, imbued with a non-negotiable moral goodness. (Presidential spokesman Ari Fleischer will, of course, have the unenviable

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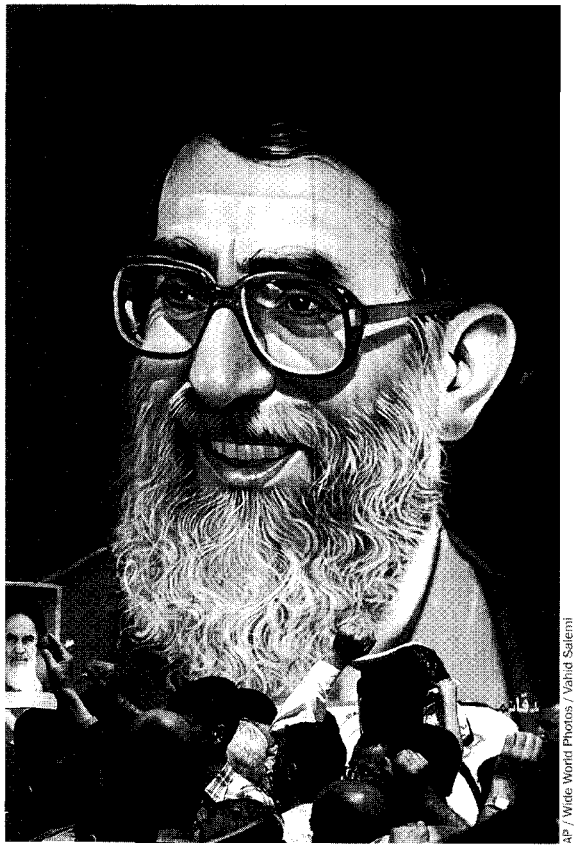
task of articulating the contradictory public truces between State, the Pentagon, and the White House, which will make it appear that the president is trying to alter his original language, if not his intent.) And the president may well be lazy, cautious, or somewhat confused about turning his ideals into a consistent, effective policy. For example, preaching liberty, the rule of law, and democracy for Palestinians on only *one* bank of the Jordan river is an odd, if not unsustainable, rhetorical position. Yet despite the unorthodox, public way foreign policy is being made, and unmade, in this administration, it seems clear that the president isn't going to stop his Reaganesque approach. The possible contradictions in the president's actions are unlikely to blunt the revolutionary edge and appeal of his message in the Middle East.



AP / Wide World Photos / Vahid Salemi

*Ayatollah Khamenei smiles down on anti-U.S. demonstrators*

A quick look at the response in Iran to the president's remarks gives you some idea how powerful liberal ideas are in the modern Middle East. From the "reformists" behind President Mohammad Khatami to the "hard core" behind spiritual leader Ali Khamenei, they are furious. The Iranian parliament passes anti-American, anti-"hegemon" declarations; the "moderates" and the "hard-liners" organize street demonstrations to prove to America and, more important, to themselves, that they cannot be intimidated. They know, even if the Near East Bureau at the State Department does not, that the Iranian people overwhelmingly view clerical rule as fundamentally illegitimate. The heavily Westernized clerics of Iran's religious establishment—and these mullahs are on both sides of the so-called "moderate-conservative" split—know perfectly well that the Persian word *azadi*, "freedom," is perhaps the most evocative word in the language now, and it no longer denotes the idea of national independence, as it did during the revolution. Under the mullahs, *azadi* means personal liberty. Its first political connotation among the people has become, without a doubt, representative democracy unfettered by a paternalistic clerical vanguard (Khatami and friends) or by a more direct, slightly more mean-spirited dictatorship (Khamenei and company). *Azadi* has also become indissolubly associated with the United States.

To his intellectual credit, Khatami knows that America is currently the driving force of history because, among other things, it is *the* engine of individual liberty, whose centripetal eminence draws to it those who wish to shatter tradition, in other words, the young. The majority of Iran's population is under 20 years of age. They are restless, angry, poor, sexually frustrated, and addicted to the dream, encouraged by the material promises of the revolution, of a better life. Khatami's failure to do much of anything since his election to the presidency in 1997 except talk, often in vague, contradictory language, about greater freedom has further made the case for the United States. Indeed, the political, Westernized clergy like Khatami and Khamenei, who have America on the brain, have become unintentionally America's most eloquent ambassadors in the Islamic Republic.

President Bush's recent decision to take his distance from Foggy Bottom's continuing wish to somehow engage the "moderate" clergy behind Khatami bilaterally will, of course, enhance the stature of America on the "Iranian street." Neither Khatami nor any other regime-loyal cleric will be able to co-opt America's immense prestige and awe among the Iranian people by suggesting through some "dialogue of civilizations" that the clerical regime can command respect abroad, or that it can induce America to pay homage to the culture and permanence of Iran's Islamic revolution. This is painfully embarrassing for the regime, which in great part defines itself vis-à-vis the United States.

This was an easy but significant victory for President Bush and, more important, for the Iranian people, who unquestionably want "regime change" in Tehran. Quite contrary to the depiction one often sees on CNN or reads in the press, America's position in the Middle East has strengthened enormously since September 11. Where it matters most—and no place matters more than Iran (the



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Israeli-Palestinian conflict is in comparison small potatoes)—America's influence has increased, if not skyrocketed. The Israeli-Palestinian war has, by the way, also fortified America's awe throughout the region. By returning to the West Bank, the Israelis, and by extension their American allies, have demonstrated how they, not Yasser Arafat and his minions, hold most of the cards in the Israeli-Palestinian future. President Bush's decision to ignore Arafat and return Washington's attention to the coming war with Iraq, combined with Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon's more aggressive military actions, has with alacrity diminished Arafat, and effectively undercut Egypt's and Saudi Arabia's designs to direct America's foreign policy.

Despite his administration's dithering on Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian question, President Bush through his war on terrorism, the axis-of-evil speeches, and his new doctrine of preemptive warfare has clearly reversed the momentum in the region, putting America's foes on the defensive. It is worthwhile to look back just a few years to see the magnitude of the Bush administration's achievement since September 11. Think about the Clinton administration's record in the Middle East. In particular, look at the way that administration handled Iran. On the ground and in the mind, the difference is striking. The Bush administration may well waste what it has achieved, depending on its future actions in Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East, but the promise and possibilities of change in the region have never been greater.

The Clinton administration, like a majority of Iran-watchers in the academy and press, really did not enjoy dissecting the nature of the Islamic Republic's tyranny. Children of the left, the Clintonites by and large could not free themselves of a basic tenet of *tiers-mondisme*: The injection of Western thought into the bloodstream of foreign cultures is somehow illicit. The same folks who had a hard time being staunch cold warriors *before* the Berlin Wall fell had a particularly hard time dealing with Islam as a political force. They wanted to avoid suggesting that there was anything politically obstreperous about Islam. Liberal, secularized Christians and Jews who wouldn't hesitate to dissect the political nature of Christianity and Judaism avoided turning the same acumen towards the Middle East's last great monotheism.

As the author Susan Sontag once remarked in a discussion about Islam and the West, it was good and right to be "pro-Muslim." Behind the Clinton administration's hope that Mohammad Khatami was something decisively different was more than a little Vietnam-era idealism and guilt about the past exercise of American power in the region. Where the pro-engagement crowd on the American right wanted to reduce or drop sanctions against the Islamic Republic primarily because of a love of free trade and a growing annoyance at the intrusion of American morality into the realpolitik of foreign affairs, the pro-engagement crowd on the American left wanted to reduce or drop sanctions primarily because of an irenic temperament. Bill Clinton wanted to make friends. Just as the Clinton crowd thought Yasser Arafat wanted peace with the Israelis, they thought Mohammad Khatami and company really wanted an amicable dialogue.

Of course, this did not mean that liberals didn't have troublesome ideals. Women's rights were an unqualified good. Persecution of Baha'is and Jews in Iran was deplorable. Stoning was bad. Lopping off hands and feet was not good either. Trying to kill the British novelist Salman Rushdie was unconscionable. But these ethical infractions somehow couldn't and shouldn't impede the commendable attempt to find a "third way," an "Islamic path to democracy." The pro-woman cleric Mohammad Khatami and the "reformist" mullahs behind him might well, we were assured by many journalists, academics, and not a few sympathetic U.S. officials off the record, hatch some kind of "post-Islamist" democratic order—an Islamism with a human face.

We needed to be patient and sympathetic and, above all, non-confrontational. We should apologize for our sins to advance reconciliation, which according to the director of the new Persian service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and the NGOers of the Soros Foundation, ought to be the ultimate objective. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright accordingly apologized for the American-backed 1953 coup against the oil-nationalizing Iranian prime minister, Mohammad Mosaddeq. She also apologized for our subsequent support to the shah and our "shortsighted" aid to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War. President Clinton went further—further certainly than any president has ever gone in trying to elevate apologia into diplomacy. He apologized for everything. He apologized not only for us, but for the entire West. President Clinton expressed his highest ideals as a form of international therapy. In an amazing, off-the-cuff speech in April 1999, the president gave us his formula for Middle Eastern conflict resolution:

> Iran has been . . . a subject of quite a lot of abuse from various Western nations. . . . It's quite important to tell people: Look, you have a right to be angry at something my country or my culture or others that are generally allied with us today did to you 50 or 60 or 100 or 150 years ago. . . . So I think while we speak out against religious intolerance we have to listen for possible ways we can give people the legitimacy of some of their fears, of some of their



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angers, or some of their historical grievances, and then say . . . now can we build a common future?

In an Iranian context, the president's well-intended sentiments were risible. Haughty and heavy-handed, the Iranians are not known for showing empathy toward their neighbors. Shahs and mullahs do not apologize. For them, statecraft is not soulcraft. It is about power. For many of the clerics in Iran, it's also about projecting God's will on earth. By disposition, President Clinton and his administration were exquisitely ill-suited to handle Iran and the Middle East. The very empathy they aimed at clerical Iran only fed the belief in the region that the United States is no longer a power much to be feared.

It is impossible to imagine George W. Bush apologizing to Iran, or to any country with which the United States has played hardball politics. It genetically just couldn't happen. In that difference of personal chemistry—and for both Bush and Clinton it is certainly more a matter of sentiment than intellectualized strategy—lies the possibility for Bush of greatness in foreign affairs. But what should the Bush administration do next concerning the Islamic Republic?

The wisest path is probably to punt downfield, as the administration is doing with the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation. The war with Iraq—assuming it happens—will have an enormous impact on the Middle East. If the United States stays in Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein and his Baathist regime, and ushers in some type of a federal, democratic system, the repercussions throughout the region could be transformative. Popular discontent in Iran tends to heat up when U.S. soldiers get close to the Islamic Republic. An American invasion could possibly provoke riots in Iran—simultaneous uprisings in major cities that would simply be beyond the scope of regime-loyal specialized riot-control units. The army or the Revolutionary Guard Corps would have to be pulled into service in large numbers, and that's when things could get interesting. The clerical regime fears big street confrontations, afraid that it cannot rely on the loyalty of either the army or the Guard Corps.

And if an American invasion doesn't provoke urban unrest, the creation of a democratic Iraq probably will. Iraq's majority Shiite population, who will inevitably lead their country in a democratic state, will start to talk to their Shiite brethren over the Iran-Iraq border. The collective Iranian conversation about American-aided democracy in Iraq will be brutal for the mullahs (which is why the Bush administration should prepare itself for Iranian mischief in Iraq's politics once Tehran determines that the Bush administration is indeed serious about ensuring a democratic triumph in Baghdad). The Bush administration should, of course, quickly and loudly support any demonstrators who hit the streets in Iran. America's approval will not be the kiss of death for the brave dissidents who challenge the regime's armed defenders. On the contrary, such psychological support could prove critical to those trying to show to the people that the die is now decisively cast against the regime.

Yet unless the ruling mullahs, or their terrorist stepchildren, the Lebanese Hezbollah, force Washington to respond to some egregious act of terrorism before the invasion of Iraq, the Bush administration ought to just let the clerics stew in their own mess. Thinking seriously about Iraq and Iran simultaneously might overwhelm the administration, which seemed completely consumed for a time by the rather small-scale war in Afghanistan.

Eventually, the administration may have to deal forcefully with the Lebanese Hezbollah—who remain perhaps the most lethal terrorist organization in the Middle East—and their Iranian and Syrian backers. The administration may have to tell the Russians, sooner rather than later, that their support of Iran's nuclear program is unacceptable. (If the Russians ignore us—and we should try to devise the most painful arm-twisting that we can for Moscow—then the administration ought to prepare for a military strike against the Bushehr reactor facility. Under no circumstances should the United States allow Bushehr to become operational.)

But for the time being, we should focus on the bully pulpit. The administration and Congress should ensure by some means that the unfortunately bankrupt National Iranian Television satellite channel in Los Angeles keeps on broadcasting to Iran (the ruling clerics detest this independent Iranian-American enterprise). Iranian expatriates living in the United States and the West have done enormous good for their homeland by prospering in emigration and by informing their friends and family in Iran—virtually everybody, given the way gossip works in the country—of their lives in the West. Iranian expatriates are the most consequential players in America's public diplomacy with the Muslim world.

President Bush, of course, doesn't need National Iranian Television broadcasts to beam his message into the Islamic Republic. Everything he says moves at lightspeed through the country. The president just needs to keep talking about freedom being the birthright of Muslim peoples. If he does so, he will do vastly more for the Iranian people than Mohammad Khatami ever will. And if history repeats itself—as goes Iran, so will go the Muslim world. ♦



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# Bleak House

## *The world of V.S. Naipaul*

By Algis Valiunas

Victoria & Albert Museum, London / Art Resource, NY.

We might construct a scale for writers: on one end, heated authors like Dickens and Hugo, filled with what George Orwell called generous anger at social injustice; on the other end, cool authors like Goethe, whose works show mostly a calm indifference. Indeed, Saul Bellow once suggested that Goethe did not much care what the world might be, so long as he could write about it.

If these are the moral poles of the modern writer's vocation, then where do we place one of our finest living writers, V.S. Naipaul? The neighborhood has changed since Dickens and Hugo depicted the threadbare and shivering masses. The formerly wretched of the earth, the Stephen Blackpools and Fantines, now take holidays on the Costa del Sol. The moral cachet for angry novelists has been transferred from the swarming proletariat of the dingy European factory towns to the destitute of the post-colonial world that is Naipaul's perennial subject.

And yet Naipaul—an Indian born and reared in Trinidad, educated at Oxford, and established in England ever since—generally does not find the distinguishing features that writers of good will are supposed to discover in the Third World. He is the author, since 1957, of twenty-five books, all solid, some brilliant, thirteen of them novels and the other twelve nonfiction, mostly travel books of acute perception and unusual meditative power. In his best-known novel, *A Bend in the River*, the narrator, Salim, observes of the soldiers of the new African army, "With their guns and jeeps, these men were poachers of ivory and thieves of gold. Ivory, gold—add slaves, and it would have been like being back in oldest Africa. And these men would have dealt in slaves, if there was still a market." Plunder, oppression, and brutality are simply immemorial customs, and one either adapts or withers away. As the cagey and unscrupulous Mahesh, who does business with the thieving soldiers, tells Salim, "It isn't that there's no right and wrong here. There's no right."

To think like this takes some getting used to. Naipaul has made the neces-

**The Writer and the World**
by V.S. Naipaul
Knopf, 517 pp., $30

**Half a Life**
by V.S. Naipaul
Knopf, 211 pp., $24

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sary adjustments, but it cost him something—and you can see that cost in his writing. An unconcealed disgust pervades the literary domain he has made his own. It is a cruel and meaningless place Naipaul inhabits, and no cure exists for the world's ills. He does imagine, however, that a palliative exists: work, which for a writer means confronting the truth straight on, without illusions or flinching. Work is good in itself, maybe the only thing in Naipaul of which that can be said. Done well, work can win one worldly success, which Naipaul understands is not nothing. And at its best, work may even allow a certain nobility.

But not even work seems capable of creating happiness. A very cold eye is required to take in and render a world as hard and bitter as this one, and Naipaul has spent a lifetime cultivating the icy perspicacity for which his vocation calls. You can observe it in his new collection of nonfiction, *The Writer and the World*, which gathers witheringly astute essays on India, St. Kitts, Anguilla, British Honduras, Mauritius, Trinidad, Zaire, the Ivory Coast, Argentina, Uruguay, Grenada, Guyana, Monterey (where the locals are trying to turn a buck from the John Steinbeck legend), New York (where Norman Mailer is running for mayor), and Dallas (where the Republican party is nominating Ronald Reagan for a second term as president).

Naipaul is a stern moralist, seeking a freedom, singularity, and seriousness that he finds strikingly absent in modern places—First World and Third World alike. The lessons he draws bear repeating, and one is not sorry to hear him repeating them. The foremost lesson is that intellectual fatuity breeds moral fiasco. Whether it is Caribbean islanders trying to remake their societies in accordance with the best Marxist-Leninist teaching, or rich Argentines preening themselves on being as civilized as Europeans when wealth is all they actually have, Naipaul sees that colonial and post-colonial peoples' aping of metropolitan ways allows them to evade awareness of their true condition and deepens their predicament.

Language is an unfailing marker of moral seriousness, and Naipaul believes verbal incontinence offends against clarity and precision of mind. At the same time, he has no patience with those who make things simpler than they really are. The words *simple*, *pure*, and *faith*, often in lethal combination, are his favored terms of abuse, wielded against dogmatic blindness. Naipaul prefers life untheoretical and unholy, turbid with complication. One suspects that his prose style and general cast of mind owe a filial debt to George Orwell. Naipaul's is a crystalline, nonsense style, and you can watch that style pitted against its natural enemy, neo-Marxist boilerplate, in his account of revolutionary passion in Grenada, where the debasement of language borrowed, the ache for purity, and the eruption of lunatic savagery are terribly clear:

V.S. Naipaul
Knopf

> Big new words were discovered for old attitudes: Grenadian workers, it was discovered, were riddled with "economism"—they just wanted money, and saw no "conceptual link" between that and work. There was at times in the meeting of the central committee the atmosphere of the classroom: linguistic skill, a new way with words, seeming to be an end in itself. . . . It was this kind of attitude, this wish for pure, dispassionate, classless revolutionary action, that led to the final, sudden madness: the placing of the leader under arrest, the sending of the army against the crowd, the execution of the leader and other ministers (all members of the central committee). The Revolutionary Military Council thought they had done the right thing.

Naipaul has been working this desolate moral territory a long time. His 1959 collection of stories, *Miguel Street*—a book simultaneously of comic verve and inconsolable melancholy—reveals both the grand scope of Naipaul's ambition and the limitations of the world that is his chosen subject. The black and brown residents of Miguel Street in Port of Spain, Trinidad, are obsessed with proving their own manhood in a colonial world that has made them something less than complete men. The title character of the opening story, "Bogart," finds his vision of manhood in the movie hero, whom he imitates right down to the American accent. In another story, a character called Man-man insists he is the new Messiah, has himself tied to a cross, and orders the assembled onlookers to stone him—only to become furious when they do. He proves in the end not a god-man, but just pure man through and through, as his double name suggests.

None of this could be called sentimental uplift for the downtrodden. It is, rather, an unsparing depiction, after the manner of Joyce's *Dubliners*, of men who live lives painfully bound by their time and place, and who really don't have a clue about what they ought to be doing on this earth. A fundamental question Naipaul's work raises is whether his subjects have it in them to become something better than they are. "Where the spiritual problem is largely that of self-contempt," he asks in *The Middle Passage: The Caribbean Revisited* (1962), how are people supposed to discern some finer possibility in themselves?

The great majority never do so, and that is a tragic loss of monumental proportions. Yet the tragedy of wasted human promise is inevitable, wherever



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men happen to be planted. Naipaul seems to have come around from a youthful anger at this waste—*The Middle Passage* stands out among his works for its fury at the human ruin caused by imperialism and slavery—to a tempered acceptance of it as just another of life's unavoidable casualties. Unavoidable but not insuperable: Somewhere between his first travel book about India, *An Area of Darkness* (1964), and his most recent, *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990), Naipaul has gone from hopeless revulsion at the debacle of everyday Indian life to a wary hope that the general lot there will improve through the diffusion of the Western idea of freedom.

Werner Forman / Art Resource, NY.

Such an attitude marks Naipaul as defender of the metropolitan civilization, the world's predominant culture, against the assaults of the intellectual fakirs—in both the First World and the Third—who claim to speak for the immiserated multitudes. Naipaul returns again and again to the theme of once-subject peoples chipped and dented by their colonial past. But he insists on their complicity in, even their primary responsibility for, their current predicaments. Never scanting the rapacity of the imperial enterprise, Naipaul is nonetheless unwilling to define that empire as purely rapacious, and he bemoans the failure of newly freed peoples to profit from their sometime masters' valuable knowledge.

Thus, in essays like "A New King for the Congo," he flays the Africans who now have the chance to feed their own rapacity and want the gaudy trappings of civilization—"the Mercedes, the fatter prostitutes, the sharp suit with matching handkerchief and cravat, the gold-rimmed glasses, the gold pen-and-pencil set, the big gold wristwatch on one hand and the gold bracelet on the other, the big belly that in a land of puny men speaks of wealth"—but who insanely reject the genuine benefits of the West. "The newspapers carry articles about science and medicine. But a doctor, who now feels he can say that he cures 'when god and the ancestors wish,' tells a newspaper that sterility is either hereditary or caused by a curse. . . . Agriculture must be modernized, the people must be fed better; but, in the name of authenticity, a doctor warns that babies should on no account be fed on imported foods; traditional foods, like caterpillars and green leaves, are best."

One Western idea that former colonials gladly embrace is the notion of the decline of the West, especially of bourgeois civilization. This is perhaps the West's most beguiling and destructive export. In *Beyond Belief* (1998), Naipaul relates the tale of a Pakistani man besotted with Marxism who spent ten years spreading the revolutionary word in Baluchistan and Afghanistan. Shahbaz's account of his life is almost pure agitprop, as though he had taken a razor to the inconvenient aspects of humanity, his own included, which must be ruthlessly cut down to the correct ideological size. It is a turn of mind that Naipaul cannot bear.

Such single-minded ruthlessness has become the hallmark of Islamic fundamentalism, which shares the Marxist contempt for liberal democracy and human complication. Of their fellow men the fundamentalists make the simplest request, which proves to be a murderously uncompromising demand: "The fundamentalists wanted people to be transparent, pure, to be empty vessels for the faith. It was an impossibility: human beings could never be blanks in that way. But the various fundamentalist groups offered themselves as the pattern of goodness and purity. . . . [All] they asked of people was to be like them and, since there was no absolute agreement about the rules, to follow the rules they followed."

Probing the Islamist movement, Naipaul detects a motive that most true believers could not admit to themselves: It is self-regard of an entirely worldly sort they are really after. Resentment and the hope of beating the fortunate at their own game power this vast engine. "Out of this purity there was going to come power, and accounts would be settled with the world."

But Naipaul also recognizes the benefit the Islamic faith can have when it is joined to a sensible modern outlook on the goods of this world, which in his view are the only goods available. He becomes fascinated by a Malaysian businessman named Nasar, who in his youth was ardent for the purity of simple village life, has acquired an English education in international relations and law, and at the age of forty-one runs a large holding company in Kuala Lumpur. Naipaul notes the sheen of confidence that success has given the man: "Simple power, simple authority" have blessed Nasar as he had hoped, twenty years before, his religious zealotry would do. Nasar is as complete a man as Naipaul finds in his travels, and Naipaul gives a fair share of the credit to Islam: "Power and authority might have brought out his latent qualities and made him what he was; but it had also to be said that religion



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had given him the important first push."

One never really expected V.S. Naipaul to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature, as he did last year. Edward Said has pronounced Naipaul's writing effectively worthless. Paul Theroux has accused Naipaul of being able to hear an eyewitness account of Hutu torture of Tutsi prisoners in Rwanda—and respond by breaking into a rendition of "Toot, toot, Tutsi, goodbye." The playwright David Hare is said to have based the protagonist of his *A Map of the World*, an intellectual of repellent serpentine coldness, with a savage contempt for the dark-skinned races to which he belongs, on Naipaul. Even those appreciative of Naipaul's art and sympathetic to his politics find him so forbiddingly dour that conversation is a near-death experience: After spending an afternoon with Naipaul, Saul Bellow declared that he would never have to observe Yom Kippur again.

Still, it is not his personality but his mild praise of Western business civilization that galls his detractors. The idea of *security*, that great bourgeois virtue, is at the core of Naipaul's moral understanding, and it is everywhere in his work. Some characters desperately seek it, while they stand little chance of ever attaining it. Others who have never known anything else treat life as though it poses no fatal danger, and they are lured into preposterously ill-considered adventures, generally fatuous sexual and political gambols, which teach them too late just how ruthless the world can be. These unfortunate characters are ordinary bourgeois men and women, whom most modern writers despise for the moral and emotional confinement of their dispiritingly tidy lives. But Naipaul savages them for not knowing how good they have it in their safely domesticated existence, and for the moral slovenliness and intellectual failure that prompt their extravagant divagations.

Sex, quite apart from love, has always been a staple of the novel of colonial encounter. In Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, "the fascination of the abomination" that makes Kurtz go native in

Victoria & Albert Museum, London / Art Resource, NY.

the Congo emphatically includes sexual pleasure of a wild heat that isn't found in Europe. In George Orwell's *Burmese Days*, an expatriate businessman who hopes to marry a very respectable English rose loses her when his cast-aside native mistress bursts into church, demanding money and tearing off her clothes. In Evelyn Waugh's *Black Mischief*, General Connoly calls his woman "Black Bitch," frank racial contempt remaining the keynote of the transaction. And in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, an accusation of sexual trespass that an Englishwoman makes against an Indian man sets off a conflagration of racial hatred, nearly consuming a peaceful colonial outpost.

Naipaul goes all these authors one better by showing the fascination of the abomination at its monstrous worst. In *Guerrillas* (1975), the vacuous English political and sexual dilettante Jane has an affair with the mulatto Caribbean revolutionary Jimmy Ahmed—but when she tells him she is going back to England, he rapes her anally and then murders her with the help of his half-witted minion Bryant, over whom he also exercises a sinister sexual proprietorship. In *A Bend in the River* Naipaul revisits this erotic preserve. This time the insulted man who lashes out is the jealous Salim, an Indian shopkeeper in Zaire who is enraged at the treachery of Yvette, who claims to love him but continues to live with her lover Raymond, a French intellectual advising the new African regime. "Her body had a softness, a pliability, and a great warmth. . . . I held her legs apart. She raised them slightly—smooth concavities of flesh on either side of the inner ridge—and I spat on her between the legs until I had no more spit."

When Yvette protests, Salim knocks the stuffing out of her. One would be hard pressed to name a more repulsive sexual episode this side of the Marquis de Sade, but Naipaul's point is that the preposterous erotic hopes of dark-skinned men who envision a fairer life with their blonde lovelies collides fatally with the carelessness of white girls out for some Third World sport. It is the women who are the imperial predators here, and Naipaul shows that their toying with men of color unleashes a monstrous anger.

At the same time, Naipaul has always possessed a vigorous comic touch, which he exercised in such early books as *Miguel Street*, *The Mystic Masseur* (1957), and *Mr. Stone and the Knights Companion* (1963). Naipaul's finest comic creation is *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961)—and it is also his finest tragic creation. Mohun Biswas—a Trinidadian of Indian descent who tries one trade after another before finding a certain success as a journalist—is a small and comically literal version of the Shakespearean "unaccommodated man." All he wants is a decent house of his own, and the story of his failed dream shows that even men of limited dimensions, pinched hopes, and flimsy attainments suffer fates as tragic as those of kings and heroes. Naipaul quietly renders the pain of living no better than half a life; that is about all that any of his characters ever does live, or appears to deserve, although the matter of just deserts is never entirely clarified, and this deliberate irresolution gives Naipaul's best work the quality of tragic loss and not merely farcical mischance or dismal moralizing.



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There is thus a sense in which the book Naipaul published this year, his first novel since 1994, is a defining work. Called *Half a Life*, it is a triumph of a Flaubertian sort, a gem made of compacted moral refuse, full of contempt for nearly every human activity. As the years have gone by, Naipaul has found less and less to laugh about. Religion is bunk, love is delusion or lower abdominal spasm, literature is mostly warmed-over Hollywood fantasy, and politics is the unleashing of the worst people's worst impulses.

The sole vocation left to a serious man is to tell the truth about the world in which he is unfortunate enough to find himself serving a life sentence. Naipaul has dedicated himself to writing of people who manage to live only half a life, and the achievement of his grim honesty is that it does make readers question whether their own lives are any better than that.

The deficiency of such bleakness is that it forecloses nearly every chance of happiness for those who do not have it in them to write books like this. But truth takes precedence over happiness. Naipaul is merciless without being pitiless. He spares no one the thorough accounting of failures, but he doesn't fail to weigh the forces, so often overwhelming, that bent or broke these woeful men and women.

Whether or not things could have gone otherwise, he doesn't really indicate—which is what makes him so hard to place on the literary scale that runs from the outrage of Dickens to the indifference of Goethe. The heartbreaking subjunctive "if only" hovers over the people in his books, and the feeling that some grave historical injustice—imperialism, slavery—continues to work in the lives of free men never quite vanishes. Yet Naipaul deplores the vulgar claims of post-colonial leftists, for he sees that every "if only" really means "if only the world were other than it is," and that to consume any vital energy in complaint about ineluctable arrangements is softness of mind and will.

In the essay "Conrad's Darkness," collected in *The Return of Eva Perón* (1980), Naipaul writes that Joseph Conrad, despite a tendency to metaphysical abstraction, possesses a regard for truth that enables him to render the real modern world. "Nothing is rigged in Conrad. He doesn't remake countries. He chose, as we now know, incidents from real life; and he meditated on them." With that encomium, Naipaul tacitly recognizes his own strength: He, too, gives you the real world, perhaps more of it than you might wish to take in. ♦

# It Takes a Village

*The artists and deadbeats of New York.*

**BY TIM MARCHMAN**

Greenwich Village has long been a neighborhood of which New Yorkers are slightly ashamed, and indeed there is something unseemly about it. Tourists and students, whether from Wyoming or Berlin, come here to exhibit themselves and indulge base appetites. It is at once a provincial and maddeningly theatrical sort of place. And yet, the Village has always been brimming with poseurs and self-indulgent dilettantes, even during its heyday.

**The Greenwich Village Reader**
*Fiction, Poetry, and Reminiscences, 1872-2002*
ed. June Skinner Sawyers
Cooper Square Press, 504 pp., $35

**Republic of Dreams**
*Greenwich Village: The American Bohemia, 1910-1960*
by Ross Wetzsteon
Simon & Schuster, 615 pp., $35

*The Greenwich Village Reader*, an anthology edited by June Skinner Sawyers, divides the writers and artists whose achievements earned the Village its current reputation into four generations: the Communists and late feminists, the cohort around Edmund Wilson and Edna St. Vincent Millay, the *Partisan Review* crowd, and that of the Abstract Expressionists. Many of the Village's best writers, such as Marianne Moore and Dawn Powell and some of the European émigrés who formed the early staff of the New School, stand somewhere apart from these groups, but none of them did much past the 1950s.

The Village is still a place where artists and intellectuals live, but these artists sell their paintings for hundreds of thousands of dollars and these intellectuals reside in university-subsidized housing. What lives on, however, is the moment it represents, the moment when a person defines himself in relation to culture. For all that is wrong with the Village (as Ross Wetzsteon writes in *Republic of Dreams*, "disaffection from the middle class became an end in itself . . . irresponsibility [became] a sign of authenticity"), it has been for ninety years a place where young people—and not only young people—come into contact with culture. It is a place where they can change themselves, escaping the rules that apply in their own neighborhoods. There are plenty of fakers, but also people who genuinely value or at least wish to value literature and music and art.

Anatole Broyard, an obscure young man fresh from the Army, met Dwight MacDonald and Delmore Schwartz and Dylan Thomas and Anaïs Nin there. Nin told him about the weird crush Edmund Wilson had on her and reminded him of what he called "melancholy Paris hotels of expatriate writing." This is where Henry James

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was born, and where Cynthia Ozick first read *Partisan Review*. Melville, Hemingway, Faulkner, and both Cranes lived there. Thelonious Monk played with John Coltrane there at the Five Spot, and Coltrane played with Eric Dolphy at the Vanguard.

For many people, though—maybe most—to think of the Village is to think of the 1920s. There is a bar on the west side, Chumley's, now frequented mostly by tourists, that was once a speakeasy. To find the place you pass through the courtyard of an apartment building; eighty years ago you would have had to knock on the thick oak door and give a special password to get in. By that time the Village had been a writer's neighborhood for twenty years. O. Henry lived there; like William Dean Howells and Theodore Dreiser, he wrote about the bohemians (a word at that point only about thirty years old). These bohemians drank and stayed up to all hours and enjoyed vigorous sex lives, consciously rejecting the still-forming mores of the American middle class. The Village was an oddly appropriate place to do it: neatly cleaved by Sixth Avenue, it was a place where two separate neighborhoods bled into one another.

Toward Broadway were the townhouses of the gilded aristocracy: This was where Henry James was born, on Washington Square Park, and it was a sort of southern annex to Union Square and Gramercy Park. Toward Seventh Avenue, first and second generation immigrants lived in a place where the priests gave services in Italian. This area was really an extension of the Lower East Side and what would later become Little Italy. The bohemians were living in a place where high and low culture were neighbors; the Village belonged as much to the Irish youths who went east to fight Jewish gangs for turf along Houston Street as it did to Henry James, who went north to visit Edith Wharton.

The writing most associated with the Village has nothing to do with the quotidian life of the neighborhood. It has to do with a few people—generally privileged ones—in the hot nights of their youth drinking and going to jazz clubs and raving to one another about the authenticity of it all, astounded by the fact that they are living a life they have always dreamed of, and by the particularities and peculiarities of that life, its every gesture and twitch.

From the beginning, with people like John Reed and Harry Kemp (author of "A Poet's Room," which opens *I have a table, cot and chair / And nothing more. The walls are bare*), it is not life but the illusion of it that is the center of interest for people writing about Greenwich Village. They are desperately trying to have an experience that defines them.

Joseph Schwartz Collection / CORBIS

*Above: Boys in the Village in the 1930s. Opposite: A café scene from 1946.*

Among writers who found a physical and spiritual home in the Village, few write of school, or work, or family; everything is in the fact of being a decadent poet. There was a belief among serious people in those days—before anyone had been reared on T.S. Eliot—that to be a poet was to be the impersonal vessel of an unseen force, that one had to live a life of dissolution to become its servant. This is not surprising in a writer like Reed, who when not being buried in the Kremlin was busy writing lines like *Muse, you have got a job before you,— / Come, buckle to it, I implore you.* It is surprising in Edmund Wilson.

This is the context in which Edmund Wilson's portraits of late-night parties with midwesterners and exotics and artists are set. *The Greenwich Village Reader* excerpts from his diaries and writings on the 1920s, which anyone interested in the neighborhood should read in their entirety. They are embarrassing, but important: embarrassing because it can be nothing else to see the writer of *Axel's Castle* trust the same facile myths as Harry Kemp; important because in them and in a long memoir of Edna St. Vincent Millay, who deflowered him ("One cannot write about Edna Millay without bringing into the foreground of the picture her intoxicating effect on people."), he codified what has become the received image of Greenwich Village—one of wild nights spent violating the Eighteenth Amendment while consorting with bohemian temptresses. Wilson went there at least in part because of the reputation it already enjoyed. And yet it was his account of the Village that became the synecdoche for an entire generation.

Through the 1920s and the 1930s one sees the sort of artistic community that is associated with the Village, but it is largely artificial, quantitatively and qualitatively. First, the artistic community there was never large compared with the broader population; second, it was populated mostly by third- and fourth-rate writers and by people whose work went into making themselves conspicuous. This sort of



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bohemianism (Wilson thought sitting on the floor to be a very bohemian act) reigned until the 1940s. After the war, younger writers drawn not by the life of the neighborhood but by the legend created by St. Vincent Millay and Wilson and others created something more concentrated and sustainable.

Here one can see the change effected in the culture by Eliot's influence; the defining figure of the period is probably the poet Delmore Schwartz. Bohemia did not mean to him, or to James Agee or Philip Rahv or the others associated with the *Partisan Review*, just sexual liberation and indulgence in alcohol and sleep deprivation. It meant books.

In *Kafka Was the Rage*, probably the best memoir written about the neighborhood, Broyard writes about how people sought defining moments not in one another but in literature. "Books," he writes, "were our weather, our environment, our clothing. We didn't simply read books; we became them. . . . While it would be easy to say we escaped into books, it might be truer to say that books escaped into us."

This is something that only a young person could feel, and while it registers a change from earlier generations (although it would be incorrect to say that Anatole Broyard cared more for books than Edmund Wilson, or less for nightlife), it shows how the neighborhood had failed to mature. Through *The Greenwich Village Reader*, one sees the same moment being described over and over: Wilson experienced it in the arms of Edna St. Vincent Millay and Broyard experienced it while reading Kafka, but that does not make it a different moment. If the writing in this anthology is fixated on this moment of self-realization, it is partly because the community celebrates such mirror-gazing, but also because the Village's reputation for doing so attracts those who are searching for such an experience. People didn't stay there once they'd had it; they simply stayed long enough to meet their replacements.

The Village is for these reasons generally more notable for who lived there

Genevieve Naylor / CORBIS

than for the work they did there, or the work it inspired; Mark Twain (or whoever) the story usually goes, may have lived there, but only for a few months. *Republic of Dreams* operates by a principle of selection which dictates that only those who were particularly associated with the Village are written about, and so most of these figures (with exceptions, such as Hart Crane and Jackson Pollock) are either second-raters like Djuna Barnes or wholly frivolous grotesques like Maxwell Bodenheim, a drunken bum who sold for a quarter poems Ezra Pound had praised. When greater figures—Saul Bellow, Nathanael West, Henry Roth—appear in this history, they do not stick around.

The neighborhood's decline, which neither book addresses, began in the late 1950s, with new residents less concerned with culture than abstract notions of authenticity. The typical figure of that time is probably LeRoi Jones, a middle-class black man posing as a ghettoized radical. His generation didn't even notice the disintegration of the old Italian and Irish populations that had held together the community in which the bohemians flourished. As the artists drove up the rents, these groups drifted south and into the boroughs, and into the void they left came a million faceless artists and professional students and self-aggrandizers, none of whom were suited to the routines that keep a neighborhood whole.

It would be fatuous to complain that there are no more artists, and that the place has fallen into the hands of bobos and basketball players and hoodlums who attend New York University and think war is wonderful because it gives them something to define themselves against: The question is not only how the Village has come to this, but whether it was ever really any different. Treating the Village as if it were the territory of the republic of letters, and not as the southern lip of a growing city, a place where the bohemians lived but also a place where poor immigrant families were trying to raise their children, is a mistake made by both *The Greenwich Village Reader* and *Republic of Dreams*, but probably an unavoidable one. Their blindness is one they share with their subjects, all too few of whom looked down from the windows of the parties they attended to the streets below. ♦



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# The Standard Reader

*"Please help—my wife won't put down a Judith Krantz novel!"*

## Too Rich

Remember Denise Rich? The Clinton pardon scandal lady? She was born wealthy, the daughter of a shoe manufacturer. She married wealthier, to financier Marc Rich, who during their time together earned more than a billion dollars—and mug-shot status on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted list. But never mind that. Marc has been pardoned, after all, and there's been a divorce, and, as a consequence, Denise is now among the wealthiest of the wealthy. She lives in a 28-room Fifth Avenue apartment, attended by a staff of 20, including her "personal healer." Denise Rich, in short, "has been through a lot and she has a message for women."

Or so said Kathleen Hughes, publisher of something called Capital Books, when early last summer that oufit announced it would publish Rich's "inspirational" autobiography. "Pardon Me" was to be the title—get it?—and celebrity ghost Laura Morton (*Jerry Springer*, etc.) was to have been the actual writer. "We're hoping for a bestseller," Hughes explained. More than hoping: Earlier this year, the Capital Books catalogue promised an October 2002 first printing of 150,000 copies.

Yes, well. It seems there's been a slight change of plans. The latest Capital Books catalogue still prominently features Rich's vanity project. There's a full-page ad on page 15. But it turns out the initial press run will be a wee bit smaller than 150,000 copies. Turns out, in fact, that *Pardon Me: The Denise Rich Story*, as unceremoniously indicated by the block letter stamp Capital Books has applied across its advertising copy, has been outright "CANCELLED." See? It really was an inspirational story, after all.

## Books in Brief

***Liberalism with Honor* by Sharon R. Krause (Harvard University Press, 288 pp., $29.95).** Sharon Krause has written one of those rare works of academic political theory that demand a wide audience. Raising the question of the status of honor in liberal democratic societies, it treats its subject with intelligence, seriousness, and a graceful style that can only be the envy of her fellow academics.

The problem Krause raises can be put simply: A healthy liberal regime needs spirited citizens, yet the very quality that animates public-spiritedness, honor, is inimical to democrats. For democrats cherish equality, and honor is a principle of distinction. What the *Federalist Papers* identify as "the ruling passion of the noblest minds"—the love of fame—we regard with suspicion and hostility. Krause traces this tension in a series of chapters on such figures as Montesquieu, Tocqueville, and Lincoln.

For all its virtues in diagnosing the problem of honor today, Krause's remedy—to follow the examples of those who led the fight for racial and sexual equality in the 20th century—is not without difficulty. For in their victories, those movements advanced the principle of equality that undermines the honor they employed. Krause might have looked to other figures—Winston Churchill, for example—who better struggled to reconcile honor and liberalism.

—*Steve Lenzner*

***Lost Nation* by Jeffrey Lent (Atlantic Monthly, 270 pp., $25).** Jeffrey Lent's first novel, *In the Fall*, was both hailed and castigated for its tragic tale of race and violence. Its thick, lavish prose seemed too ambitious, just as its soaked atmosphere of a hard life on Vermont land seemed too cynical, inviting comparison to other dirt-road bestsellers like Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain*.

This was unfair. Lent had enough punch to be considered in all but the most serious class. Unfortunately, his second novel does not strengthen his case. *Lost Nation* is a frontier tale about an ungoverned bit of land in what is now Vermont and a community as it struggles to rise above what political philosophy might call a state of nature. Lent delivers a compelling portrait of this coarse society and its coarse pleasures, building his tale around the day-to-day life of a one-whore pub. First and foremost, however, *Lost Nation* is the story of the condemnation of the pub's owner, Micajah Blood Bolles, known simply as "Blood." It is Blood's fate to live in guilt for a sin against his own family—a crime so profound that no penance is really possible. Not unforgiven so much as unforgivable, Blood is, miserably, more than capable of recognizing the profound depths of his own transgressions.

All well and good and dark and morally interesting, until the light of goodness begins to illuminate the hellish recesses of Blood's heart, which may not be as bad as one thought. The story opens with his



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relationship with the young prostitute he's won in a poker game; Blood's trials, however, are resolved with a stunning glibness that threatens the more-interesting final twist. Indeed, the execution of the book's most important scene casts in doubt the seriousness of the story. As one realization after another slowly dawns on the reader, the most important one comes out fatuous and cute.

Lent's subject is the American soul, Christian and savage at the same time, noble but also tragic, on the brink of civilization but prone to monstrousness even in the presence of a governing body. There is much violence in *Lost Nation*, but also much suspense of the Old-Western sort, with guns and horses and whatnot. And at many a turn, the story is entertaining, a quality one wouldn't have expected after the dour poetry of *In the Fall*. Alas, one wishes it were just a little bit less entertaining.

—*David Skinner*



# Snobbery in America

## *Joseph Epstein on his fellow citizens.* BY ANDREW FERGUSON

*Snobbery: The American Version* by Joseph Epstein (Houghton Mifflin, 274 pp., $25)

Snobbery is a touchy subject for Americans. Most of us hold to an egalitarian civic creed, but we're still human: We like looking down on the next guy as much as the next guy. Reverse snobbery has been a specialty here, where (small-d) democrats often scorned members of (big-S) Society even more intensely than vice versa. This was easier to pull off when we had an upper class clearly definable by ancestry and religion—the Waspocracy, in Joseph Epstein's coinage—that other Americans could look down on for being so snobbish.

But the American Waspocracy surrendered long ago and is no more. Its disappearance has led to many complications, as Epstein notes in his new book, *Snobbery: The American Version*. "What the demise of the Waspocracy did for snobbery," he writes, "was to unanchor it, setting it afloat if not aloft, to alight on objects other than those connected exclusively with social class."

The American version of snobbery, in other words, is something new—and much better, I would add, than any other snobbery in the world; vastly superior, indeed, to what you'll find among those snooty Europeans, who think they're all so great—much richer in its variety, and much more slippery in its marvelous and unending exfoliations. Democracy, it turns out, is fertile soil for envy, insecurity, and one-upmanship, the conditions necessary for the flourishing of snobs.

They, we, are everywhere. "No subject," he writes, "apart possibly from podiatry, is impermeable to snobbery," which allows Epstein—the celebrated essayist who needs no introduction to readers of THE WEEKLY STANDARD, where he is that rarest of journalistic creatures, a contributing editor who actually contributes—to roam freely over the wide expanse of American culture.

He gives us a tour of club snobbery and snobbery in dress, job snobbery and snobbery in politics, with many stops in between. His eye is keen but not unkind, and his erudition, which runs very deep, is casually deployed. On a single page he can quote William Dean Howells, Lady Diana Cooper, Jean Cocteau, and Ludwig Wittgenstein without, amazingly, clogging the pipe of his argument or, still more amazingly, betraying the slightest suggestion of showing off.

He's pretty quotable himself. In a chapter on food snobbery he notes that in high-end grocery stores today, "there are more varieties of balsamic vinegar than American states, more virgin olive oils than actual virgins." He is excellent on downward mobility, one of those complications unleashed when Baby Boomers decided, out of reverse snobbery, to reject the conventions of the upper-middle class.

Quoting John Adams's over-quoted letter to Abigail ("I must study politics and war that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy..." and so on), he brings it up to date for an immigrant grandfather: "I must run a dry-cleaning shop so that my sons can go to medical and law school, in order that their sons may study sociology and communications, so that their children can run vintage clothing stores, act in avant-garde theater, and work in coffee shops."

I say that Epstein is not unkind; sometimes, though, he's not kind either, particularly when it comes to personages who have built their careers much more on self-promotion and snob appeal than talent. (Will Susan Sontag ever be able to leave home again, or at least appear on *The Charlie Rose Show*, after she reads pages 148-50?) But his general tone is amiable, detached, and amused. This is as it should be, given an object so enduring as snobbery, so impervious to scolding or uplift. He admits to being a snob himself from time to time, though he struggles against it. "All snobbery is, in some sense, ill bred—in the sense that everything is ill bred that does not seem to have behind it kindness, generosity, and a good heart."

In these three qualities are to be found the reliable antidotes to snobbery—and, not coincidentally, the animating forces behind this wise and funny book. ♦

*Andrew Ferguson is a contributing editor to* THE WEEKLY STANDARD.



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**"Those women are cutting prices and stealing our business. . . . We're only getting one or two clients a day when it was five or six before." (Florence, a 37-year-old French prostitute complaining that prostitutes from former Soviet bloc countries are taking over the Parisian sex trade.)**
***–The Times (London), July 22, 2002***

# A Tale of Two Marketing Strategies

***What French and Russian prostitutes say to their clients***

## *The French Style*

"Do you have a reservation?"

"I'm afraid the wait is at least an hour."

"Yes, I close for lunch. Is this not a fundamental right of man?"

"Have you made your selection?"

"What's a Lewinsky?"

"Please make a better suggestion. You're boring me."

"Why are you taking off your clothes?"

"No, I don't do sex. I only do sex theory."

"Look, if you're going to talk dirty, it has to be in French. You want the culture police in here?"

"Sorry, what was that? I was just thinking of the plight of the Palestinians."

"Yes I bathed last month. Why do you ask?"

"Is not banality the cruelest form of oppression? Are we not trapped in cycles of climax and recovery, signifying nothing?"

"How can one put a price tag on something so ineffable? Just give me your wallet."

## The Russian Style

"Do you work for the IMF?"

"Are you sure? We offer reduced corporate rates."

"I charge $10,000."

"OK. This week we're having a sale. $49."

"$6? Fine. Should I bring my sisters?"

"By the way, would you like to buy an intercontinental missile?"

"No, not stolen. Honest. I can throw in a VCR."

"This is a nice hotel suite. Do you mind if I take the refrigerator when we're done?"

"No, it's not the drugs. It's the despair. Sometimes I despair for the Russian soul."

"No, no, you keep right on going. I'll just lie here weeping. The longing. The loneliness. The longing for Mother Russia. The fields. The masses. The wheat. Endless fields of wheat . . ."

". . . Pushkin. The Urals. Springtime at my father's dacha. Have I mentioned the wheat?"

"All happy hookers are alike, but each unhappy hooker is unhappy in her own way."

"Honest. I didn't mean to take your watch. It must have fallen into my purse."



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# American Interests and Geopolitical Realignment

**Thomas Henriksen is a senior fellow and associate director at the Hoover Institution.**

Geopolitics is not something Americans spend a lot of time thinking about; we leave that to Foggy Bottom types. But recent developments on the international landscape warrant much more attention than they have attracted.

The Bush administration's success in moving Russia closer to the West represents a remarkable change in geopolitical alignment. **The 1990s witnessed an emerging anti-American partnership between former adversaries Russia and China, which Washington seemed powerless to impede.**

For much of the past decade, Beijing has wooed a weakened post-Soviet Russia by evoking common extremist threats and resentment of U.S. superpowerdom. Last July, China obtained Russia's signature on the Treaty of Good Neighborliness, Friendship, and Cooperation, which, among other things, recognized Beijing's claim to Taiwan and further pitted the two states against U.S. intervention by highlighting the role of the United Nations.

The broadening Sino-Russian entente began to raise red flags. Instances of converging interests strengthened these misgivings: China buys Russian ships and planes for its offshore agenda. Both fight separatists in Central Asia's former Soviet republics, some of whom infiltrated western China. Beijing, the senior partner in the Russo-Chinese corporation, has been gaining influence in Inner Asia as Moscovite power recedes. Behind China's gambit is the quest for access to the vast oil and gas reserves in Inner Asia.

By forming closer relations with the Kremlin, the Middle Kingdom also hopes to break out from its perceived American encirclement and secure its northern border in an effort to pursue a more assertive posture, or "forward policy," in the Pacific.

Ostensibly, Beijing and Moscow consummated their romance this June when Presidents Jiang Zemin and Vladimir Putin cosigned the Shanghai Cooperation Organization charter—along with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan—which strengthens previous treaties on reducing forces along mutual borders and cooperating against terrorism and separatism. But appearances fooled no one, especially not China, for it understands Moscow's recent pro-Western tilt.

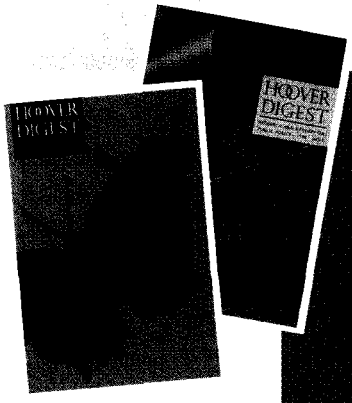
At the beginning of the Bush presidency, China's ascendant economy, size, and ambition seemed poised to confront a United States estranged from Russia and assailed by Europe for its unilateralism.

George W. Bush, however, succeeded in undermining this looming Moscow-Beijing axis by drawing Putin into the U.S. antiterrorism campaign, attaining the Kremlin's acquiescence in the deployment of U.S. forces in Central Asian republics, defusing its resistance to Washington's pullout of the ABM treaty, and assuaging its opposition to NATO's eastward enlargement by granting it greater sway with the NATO-Russia Council in May. For Russia, it gets a more reliable partner with the United States plus the benefit of having the United States in Central Asia.

Thus the Bush administration should receive as much acclaim as Richard Nixon did thirty years ago for realigning China on America's side against the Soviet Union. In the present case, **Bush has moved Russia closer to the West and outflanked China on the strategic chessboard.** This statecraft could result in a genuine realignment benefiting the West and Russia. Now it's time to turn our attention back to China and continue to engage it in a twenty-first-century framework of security for the great powers.

*— Thomas Henriksen*

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

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"[Reimportation] would actually create an incentive for unscrupulous individuals to find ways to sell unsafe or counterfeit drugs that, while purported to be from Canada, may actually originate in any part of the world."

"... the threat does not depend upon the nature of the re-imported product, but upon the integrity of those handling it."

[The current] "closed regulatory system has been very successful in preventing unapproved, adulterated or mis-branded drug products from entering the U.S. stream of commerce. Legislation that would establish other distribution routes for drug products, particularly where those routes routinely transverse a U.S. border, creates a wide inlet for counterfeit drugs and other dangerous products that are potentially injurious to the public health and a threat to the security of our nation's drug supply."

—*Lester M. Crawford, D.V.M, Ph.D.*
Deputy Commissioner
Food and Drug Administration
Department of Health & Human Services
July 17, 2002

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